

## TO THE READER

K I N D L Y use this book very carefully. If the book is disfigured or marked or written on while in your possession the book will have to be replaced by a new copy or paid for. In case the book be a volume of set of which single volumes are not available the price of the whole set will be realized

**SRI PRATAP COLLEGE**  
**SRINAGAR.**

**LIBRARY**

*R*

Class No. 82.9

Book No. C 95 G

Acc. No. 16803



3/5

1 FEB 2006





**SRINAGAR** -( Kashmir )

**DATE LOANED**

*Class No.* \_\_\_\_\_ *Book No.* \_\_\_\_\_

Acc. No. \_\_\_\_\_.

This book may be kept for **14 days**. An over - due charge will be levied at the rate of **10 Paise** for each day the book is kept over - time.

[illegible]

**SRI PRATAP COLLEGE LIBRARY**  
**SRINAGAR (Kashmir)**

**DATE LOANED**

Class No. \_\_\_\_\_ Book No. \_\_\_\_\_

Acc. No. \_\_\_\_\_

This book may be kept for **14 days**. An over - due charge will be levied at the rate of **10 Paise** for each day the book is kept over - time.

[illegible]

**SRI PRATAP COLLEGE LIBRARY**  
**SRINAGAR (Kashmir)**

**DATE LOANED**

Class No. \_\_\_\_\_ Book No. \_\_\_\_\_

Acc. No. \_\_\_\_\_

This book may be kept for **14 days**. An over - due charge will be levied at the rate of **10 Paise** for each day the book is kept over - time.

[illegible]

# THE GOLDEN ROAD IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

*Library Sri Puroshottam College  
Srinagar.*

**SRINAGAR ( Kashmir )**

**Class No.** \_\_\_\_\_ **Book No.** \_\_\_\_\_

Acc. No. \_\_\_\_\_

**This book may be kept for 14 days. An over - due charge will be levied at the rate of 10 Paise for each day the book is kept over - time.**

[illegible]

**SRI PRATAP COLLEGE LIBRARY**  
**SRINAGAR -( Kashmir )**

**DATE LOANED**

Class No. \_\_\_\_\_ Book No. \_\_\_\_\_

Acc. No. \_\_\_\_\_

This book may be kept for **14 days**. An over - due charge will be levied at the rate of **10 Paise** for each day the book is kept over - time.

[illegible]





A Chester Miracle Play

Mary Sri Prasad College  
Sriperumbudur



# THE GOLDEN ROAD IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

From Beowulf to Bernard Shaw

BY  
AMY CRUSE

AUTHOR OF  
"THE SHAPING OF ENGLISH LITERATURE" ETC.



GEORGE G. HARRAP & COMPANY LTD.  
LONDON SYDNEY TORONTO BOMBAY

820.9  
C 95 G  
16803

③

*First published 1931  
by GEORGE G. HARRAP & CO. LTD.  
39-41 Parker Street, Kingsway, London, W.C.2  
Reprinted 1949*

---

## Preface

**I**N this book I have tried to tell you something about the way in which we English people have made for ourselves the wonderful possession that we call our literature. I have tried to show this literature to you, not (as we are sometimes tempted to think of it) as a collection of marvellous and beautiful things, each one brought into being by some particular man or woman, worked at and finished with loving care, and then placed reverently in a great storehouse for the use and joy of future generations, but rather as a living thing, the product of the whole nation's growth, in which the humblest of our forefathers, working with the greatest, has had his small, unnoticed part.

If I might put what I wish to say to you in the form of a parable, I would call our literature a fair and spacious garden in which the soil is the people. Out of that soil grows the common grass, which is the everyday literature of use and necessity, not very striking, perhaps, but capable of a beauty of its own. Out of it, too, grow the weeds, which are the useless and harmful writings; the flowers that last for a season only, which are the books, good and helpful in their day, but faded in the eyes of a new generation; the perennials, those books that have a longer span of life, but which die at last; and the lovely, immortal flowers that grow and blossom, and for ever put forth new buds, and are fresh and fragrant through all the ages.

And if we, the ordinary folk, are the soil, it is for us to see that we are rich and fruitful. We cannot of ourselves produce one of these unfading flowers. The seed must be given by a higher power than ours, and so must the sunshine and the fresh air and the rain. But we can do much to influence its growth and give it its form and character: so it has been in



all past ages, as the history of our literature testifies; and so it is to-day.

Again, the leaves and the flowers fall, and return to the soil in which they grew, enriching and strengthening it. So the books we read enrich and strengthen us, and give us power to promote better and finer growths; and thus the interchange goes on, and the nation helps literature and literature helps the nation.

To leave our parable and come back to plain speaking—our English literature is a wonderful, living thing, that has grown up, as all great and good things do grow, slowly, naturally, influenced by various outside conditions, obeying certain clear and unalterable laws. It has not been served only by its great men; the people have done their part, as you and I are doing our part to-day. If we are content with a dull and trivial literature, we shall get that and no more. If there are even a few among us who are eager and alert, who think nobly and aspire greatly, there will come the man or woman who will write for those few the book that will be their sustenance and delight.

So I want you as you read about the great writers whose works we all love to think a little about the vast crowd of unremembered people behind them who have helped them to gain their triumph, and have been helped by them to a fuller and happier life.

A. C.

---

## Acknowledgment

THE author gratefully acknowledges permission received from the following for the use of copyright extracts: Messrs Chatto and Windus, for a passage from *Under the Greenwood Tree*, by Thomas Hardy; the Trustees of the estate of the late Joseph Conrad, for a passage from *Lord Jim*, by Joseph Conrad; Messrs Constable and Co., Ltd., London, and Messrs Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, for a passage from *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, by George Meredith; Messrs Ellis, for lines from *The King's Tragedy*, by Dante Gabriel Rossetti; Mr John Galsworthy and Messrs William Heinemann, Ltd., for quotations from *The Forsyte Saga*; Messrs Longmans, Green and Co., Ltd., for lines from *The Life and Death of Jason*, by William Morris; Messrs Macmillan and Co., Ltd., London, for *The Oxen*, from *The Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy*; Messrs Macmillan and Co., Ltd., London, and the Macmillan Company, New York, for *Crossing the Bar*, from *The Complete Works of Alfred Lord Tennyson*; and Messrs Macmillan and Co., Ltd., London, and Messrs Harper and Brothers, New York, for a passage from *Far from the Madding Crowd*, by Thomas Hardy.

## THE GOLDEN ROAD IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

---

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXVI. DR JOHNSON AND THE CLUB	338
XXVII. THE NEW COMEDY	374
XXVIII. THE BLUESTOCKINGS	384
XXIX. THE NEW POETRY	404
XXX. THE ROMANTIC WRITERS	454
XXXI. CHARLES LAMB	488
XXXII. THE LYRISTS	498
XXXIII. THE DOMESTIC NOVEL	514
XXXIV. THE GREAT VICTORIANS	523
XXXV. FROM VICTORIA TO THE GREAT WAR	616
INDEX	659



---

# THE GOLDEN ROAD IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

## *Chapter I*

### THE LAYS OF THE FIGHTING-MEN

**T**HE fighting-men who were our forefathers came sailing over the sea toward this land in their stout wooden ships, whose curving prows made them look like birds skimming the waters. The land these men had left—the northern part of the country we now call Denmark—was covered with wood and heath, barren sands and dreary marshes, and they had no taste for the hard and patient labour that must be given if this poor soil was to be made fruitful. They loved better the life of the sea-rover, whose riches were the plunder won in a hard fight. Many a time, skirting the coasts of Britain, they had looked longingly toward that fair island and thought of the treasures that, so men said, lay within it—teeming cornfields, fine villas full of precious things, jewels worn by proud ladies, churches that held vessels of gold and silver, set with priceless gems. But they had never dared to beach their boats in any of the creeks that offered such good harbourage, or to sail defiantly up the broad river-mouths; for the terrible Roman legionaries had for four centuries guarded Britain, and there were strong forts set along the coast past which the Northmen knew no invader could sail.

But at last their chance came. The Romans were called back to their own country, and the Britons were left to defend their land as best they could. They were brave enough, but four centuries of dependence had made them helpless without their leaders, and this their enemies very



quickly understood. From all sides they poured in. The Picts came from the northern parts of Britain and the Scots from Scotia across the narrow sea on the west; and from Scandinavia and Denmark came the Northmen, swooping down in their dragon ships, proud and fierce and terrible, to ravage and destroy.

You all know the story of how at length the British King of Kent, harassed and desperate, asked one of these northern tribes to help him drive out the others; and how, very willingly, they came—tall, fair-haired warriors, eager for battle. Having come, they stayed. They drove out the enemy, then turned upon the people of the land, slaying and burning, and driving the wretched remnant of the Britons to the shelter of the hills and forests and marshlands. Other northern tribes followed the first, and, fighting fiercely, year after year, generation after generation, until more than a century had passed, at length they made themselves masters of the whole island.

These were the men who made our first English songs—these stern, strong warriors who, even after they had settled down in groups of homesteads and begun to till the ground, still felt a fierce joy when the call came to put on their helmets and birnies<sup>1</sup> and go out against a body of unsubdued Britons, or raid a settlement of some tribe hostile to their own. When the fight was over and they came back to their homes they proudly told the tale of burning and slaughter and deadly hand-to-hand encounters to the folk who had stayed behind. Sometimes one of them would put it into a kind of rough chant; and the next one who told it would remember some of the phrases and use them, mingling them with his own. If the hearers liked the story it was repeated many times, until it took a definite form and many people knew it by heart; if it did not happen to please them it was dropped and soon forgotten.

After a time it was usually found that there were one or

<sup>1</sup> Corslets to protect the body.



two men in every village more skilful than the others in telling these stories, and these men took pains and time in putting them in such a shape as they thought would best please those who listened. As the years went on the incident on which the story had been founded was almost forgotten, and no one complained when the singers added to their lay fresh incidents of their own invention, or when they joined two stories together, or even when they borrowed ideas from the old myths and used these in the later stories. The men who went about among the people singing these songs were called the gleemen, which means "bringers of joy."

The last touches to these lays of the fighting-men were given by the scops, who were the professional makers of song. Every great Anglo-Saxon lord had among his followers one of these scops, who ranked with the noblest of the band. It was his duty to sing the praises of those who had done bravely in battle, and to entertain the rest of the band when they gathered in their lord's hall for the evening meal. Sometimes the songs that he sang were those he had made himself; but more often he took one of those that had been roughly shaped among the people, altered it a little, polished it, and fashioned it according to certain rules that had come to be recognized by the makers of Saxon poetry.

The Northmen had been used to make these lays when they lived in their old home in Denmark, and perhaps they brought some with them when they came to settle in this country. Many others they made during the years they lived here as masters of the land, but only a very few of these have come down to us. These early dwellers in England knew nothing of writing as we practise it now. They had an alphabet made up of signs which they called runes, and they used these signs in carving inscriptions on their weapons and other articles made of wood, bone, or metal. They sometimes sent messages by means of runes cut on strips of bark or wood, and they used such strips also as charms. But they had no means of writing out a long story. The lays were stored in



the memory of the people, and especially of the scops, and were passed on from father to son through many generations. After the art of writing was introduced some of them were written down, but only a very few manuscripts have come down to us, and most of these are damaged and imperfect.

There is only a single manuscript which contains anything like a complete story, and that story is such a splendid and exciting one that it makes us think longingly of the many that must have been lost. It is called *Beowulf*, and scholars tell us that it was almost certainly made—at any rate, in part—in Denmark before the Northmen came to Britain. Whether they brought it with them, or whether it came with a band of invading Danes at a later time, we do not know, but we know that it must have been altered and added to after it came to our country, because there are in it various references to the Christian religion which could not have come from a heathen people. Many of the scops, we are sure, knew *Beowulf* by heart, although it is a long lay of more than three thousand lines; and many times at the evening meal it must have been sung to the warriors gathered in the great hall of their lord. Let us try, in imagination, to join them as they sat there and listen with them to this great story.

All down the hall stood rough tables on trestles covered with dishes of meat, loaves of bread, wooden trenchers, knives, and tankards of horn or of silver filled with mead. On the walls hung the warriors' shields, and on benches round the tables sat the warriors. They talked loudly, but with little laughter or merriment, for our forefathers were a stern and serious people, and their sense of humour was small. The scop, as he stood on the dais at the end of the hall, where the lord and his family had their seats, knew exactly the kind of story that would delight this audience of brave and turbulent men, and out of the store that he held in his memory he chose *Beowulf*. He struck a chord upon his harp, and the clear notes sounded above the hubbub in the hall, which died away as the warriors turned their faces



expectantly toward the singer. Then, in a high, chanting voice, he began his lay.

In the days of old, sang the scop, there lived a great chief of the Spear Danes, whose name was Hrothgar. He was strong and valiant, and victorious in battle, and it came into his mind that as a thankoffering for all that had been given to him he would build a hall, greater and fairer than any man had ever heard of. He set his people to work, and the hall rose, lofty and broad-gabled, and he called it Heorot. There every day there was feasting and rejoicing with harp and with song, and at night the warriors lay down on the benches to sleep, fearing no evil. But a horrid monster, named Grendel, who lived in the misty fens with his loathly following of elves and water fiends, heard of this fair dwelling; and he, the hater of all good, came stepping over the moorlands in the darkness and entered Heorot. In his horrible claws he seized thirty of the sleeping thanes, and, greedily exulting, he bore them away to his grim fen fastness and devoured them.

In the morning when the warriors awoke they found their comrades gone, and saw clearly the tracks made by the monster as he bore away his victims. They wept in bitter grief, and Hrothgar sat among them, bowed down by the heaviness of his sorrow. Nor was that the end of the trouble, for that same night the monster came again, and went back laughing and victorious to feed on the bodies of those he had borne away. Again and again he came, till none dared sleep in Heorot, and the wide, beautiful hall stood sad and empty. Twelve years this sorrow lasted, though Hrothgar and his thanes never rested in the war they waged against Grendel, but always the fiend escaped unharmed. The Spear Danes offered sacrifices to their gods, but without avail, and all lived in terror of this grisly monster, who stole night after night from the misty moorlands to work his horrid will.

Then one day there came a beautiful, bird-like ship speeding over the waves toward their land; and when it reached



the shore a band of tall, proud young warriors, clad in mail, with golden boars on their helmets and bearing shining shields, stepped from it and came striding up the strand. The Warden of the shore-cliffs spurred his horse toward them. "What men are ye, having battle-gear, clad in birnies, who thus come in your ship over the sea-road? Now must I learn of what blood ye are, ere ye fare farther into the land of the Danes."

The leader answered, "We are friends, men of the Geats, and kin of your folk. My father knew the father of Hrothgar well. We have heard of the sorrow of this land, and have come to offer our help." Then the Warden led them along the pebbled highway to the house where the King dwelt. There they set their shields up against the wall, and the leader answered the warrior who came forward to ask them of their country and their king: "Beowulf is my name. Take me to Hrothgar, and to him, if he will grant me hearing, I will tell my errand."

So they brought him to where Hrothgar, old, and with hair exceeding white, sat among his earls; and Beowulf told how he and his band had come to help the Spear Danes in their trouble, and how he, if Hrothgar gave him leave, would do battle with the fiend. Then Hrothgar brought the newcomers in to the company, and they made a banquet, and all praised Beowulf and thanked him for his friendship. Waltheow the queen, in her deckings of gold, brought to him the gemmed beaker that he might drink, and the feast went on until it was time for the warriors to go to their rest. Then Hrothgar and Waltheow and all their followers went from the hall and left Beowulf and his band alone. Beowulf took off his birnie and helm and laid aside his sword, for he would fight, he said, as Grendel fought, without weapons or defences. Calmly he lay down to sleep, his followers around him; and in the great hall there was silence.

Then, high-stepping over the misty moorlands, came Grendel, making his way with greedy joy toward Heorot.



He laid his fearful claws upon the iron bands of the door and burst them at a stroke, and he laughed with hateful glee to see the brave band lying asleep. Swiftly he seized one of them, tore his body in pieces, and began to devour it. Then Beowulf sprang up from his bed, and seized the hand of the fiend in a grip so terrible that, strive as he might, Grendel could not get free. He cried out fiercely in his pain and anger, but still Beowulf held on. Up and down the hall they went, overturning the benches and throwing down tankards and shields with a deafening clang. Beowulf's followers tried with their swords to pierce the monster's limbs or body, but no mortal sword availed against the fiend.

Outside, the terrified people gathered, listening to the wild shrieks of Grendel and the loud din of battle. It seemed as if the hall itself, strongly built though it was, could not stand against this awful strife. But Beowulf still held the fiend in his mighty grasp, and at last, slowly, horribly, the giant's sinews began to crack. Soon the Geats, striking wild and fruitless blows for their lord, saw the flesh of the monster's shoulder give way and the blood gush out. Loud shrieked Grendel in his agony; but still Beowulf held on. Wider grew the wound, the flesh parted; the hand and arm remained in Beowulf's grasp, and Grendel rushed from the hall, the hot blood dropping from him, and made his way back to his grim fastness in the fens, to die.

In rushed the Dane-folk, rejoicing at the victory and loudly praising Beowulf for his valour. When the morning came they followed the track of the monster to a gloomy mere, whose dark waters were seething with his hot blood; then home they came exulting. That night in the mead-hall Beowulf's praises were sung with loud acclaim, and Hrothgar gave to him and to his followers rich gifts of twisted gold, with arm-jewels, and rings, and coats of mail; and when the feasting was over they all lay down to sleep in Heorot, fearing nothing since the dread fiend was dead.



But when the night was darkest and most still there came from the misty fenlands a loathly shape stealing along the silent paths toward Heorot. This creature was not as huge as Grendel, but was as evil to look upon; for it was the mother of the fiend, come to avenge her son. Stealthily she crept into the hall and seized one of the warriors, then turned and swiftly made her way back to her fastness. So heedful was she that before the rest of the warriors could rouse themselves and spring up she was gone.

Then arose loud and grievous cries, for the noble she had carried off was Æschere, best loved by Hrothgar of all his thanes. Heavy sorrow fell once more on all the people, and the King bade his warriors send for Beowulf, in whom lay their only hope. Beowulf had not slept in Heorot that night, another lodging having been given him, but he rose quickly and came to Hrothgar. Sorrowfully the tale was told, and swiftly Beowulf armed himself, speaking comforting words to the old King. "I promise thee she shall not flee to shelter, not in earth's bosom, or mountain forest, or ocean's bed."

Hrothgar and Beowulf and a band of followers set out. They followed the fiend's tracks over the murky moor, along narrow, stony ways, shadowed by beetling cliffs, over strange and sunless paths, that ran beside black pools where lurked fierce water fiends; and at last they came to an awesome spot where dark trees cast their shadows upon the grey rock that overhung the seething waters of a great mere. Here on the cliff they found the head of Æschere, and their sorrow was renewed.

At the sound of Beowulf's war-horn the dragons and serpents and sea-drakes and beasts of the worm kind that were lying on the rocks or moving in the waters fled swiftly to the depths of the mere—save one which the Geat chief killed with an arrow. Then Beowulf made himself ready. He put on his armour, and Hrothgar gave to him his famous sword, Hrunting, that never failed a hero in battle. The old



King promised that he would care well for the band of Geats if their master should lose his life.

Beowulf plunged boldly into the dread waters of the mere, and for the space of a whole day he went down and down before he reached the bottom. Here Grendel's mother lay in wait. She seized him with her loathly fingers, and though her grasp could not pierce his mail, yet he could not escape nor even draw his sword against her. Onward she bore him through the waters, while horrid sea-beasts crowded round them; and at last she brought him into a great cave, a roofed hall, where a fire burned brightly. There she set him down, and in a flash he drew his sword and smote her on the head, so that the sword's song sounded through the cave. But no mortal weapon could pierce that foul, enchanted body, and in wrath Beowulf flung from him the useless sword.

In strength now he trusted,  
The hard hand-grip of might and main; so shall a man do  
When he in the war-tide yet looketh to winning  
The praise that is longsome, nor aught for life careth.

He seized her by the shoulders and hurled her to the ground, but she rose quickly and laid hold on him so that he tripped and fell. Then she flung herself on his body and drew her dagger, but it could not pierce his birnie, and he struggled to his feet. He saw, lying among the war gear that was scattered about the cave, an old sword, huge and heavy, so that none but a giant could bear it out to battle. Strong in his fierce anger, he seized it and smote upon the neck of his enemy; the sword passed through, and she fell to the ground.

Breathless and triumphant, the hero gazed around him, and saw lying stretched out upon the floor of the cave the dead body of Grendel. Fierce wrath flamed up in Beowulf as he remembered how this monster had devoured many of Hrothgar's famous warriors, and with a blow of the great sword he cut off the foul fiend's head.

Meanwhile, Hrothgar and his followers sat silent and fearful beside the gloomy waters of the lake. Long they



watched, and at length saw, mingling with the swirling waters, a stream of blood rising from below. Sad and hopeless, Hrothgar and his men turned toward their homes, but Beowulf's own thanes remained, sick at heart, staring on the mere.

Soon their sorrow was turned to rejoicing, for Beowulf did not linger in the foul fiend's cave. He took no treasure from her wicked hoard save the head of Grendel and the sword with which he had done battle. Of this sword only the hilt remained; the blade had been burned away by the hot blood of the monster he had slain. Then he rose up, swimming through the water, and his thanes rushed to him, filled with joy. They loosened his helmet and birnie, then started on their glad way toward Heorot. Four of them bore the spear on which was placed the head of Grendel. They bore it into the hall where Hrothgar sat with his queen Waltheow, his warriors around him. Beowulf told of his adventures, and gave to Hrothgar the hilt of the giant sword. There was feasting and giving of treasure, and the next day Beowulf and his band, laden with gifts, sailed in their dragon ships for their own land:

The sea-wender fared,  
Floated the foamy-neck'd forth o'er the waves,  
The well-fashioned ship o'er the streams of the ocean.

The scop finished his lay, and the fighting-men, who had listened to it with delight, raised a clamour of applause. The lord gave to the singer a ring, or an arm-jewel, or a finely chased tankard of gold or silver, and the lord's wife bore the mead cup to him and thanked him for his lay.

It was a story such as this story of Beowulf that the fighting-men loved, and we believe that there were many more of the same kind treasured in the memory of the scops and of the people. The years passed, and the Saxons, or 'English,' as the Northmen were now called, left off fighting one another, formed themselves into peaceable kingdoms, and settled down to till the ground and breed cattle. But the old



fighting spirit was not dead, and when the Danes harried the country, or when some feud broke out among them they were as ready as ever to put on chain-mail and take up the shield and sword. They still loved the old lays that told of fierce hand encounters where victory was won by sheer valour of heart and strength of limb, and *Beowulf* was still sung by proud scop in the halls of kings. It passed from one generation to the next, with no great alterations, now that it had reached a settled form, except that from time to time a scop who had become a Christian would add a few lines or alter a phrase to show that he believed that the White Christ, of whom the priests had told him, was the God of Battles, giving victory to whom He willed. So it came about that into this heathen poem crept such lines as:

The Almighty One made the Earth's fashion,  
The fair field and bright midst the bow of the waters,  
And with victory beglory'd set Sun and Moon,  
Bright beams to enlighten the bidders on land.

At length the time came when the poem was written down. Scholars tell us that this happened during the tenth century; so much they have found out by an examination of the forms of the words and the spelling. By the same signs they have been led to believe that the copy was made in Northumberland. The copyist was most likely a monk who took the lay down from the mouth of one of the scop; and perhaps it was this monk who put in some of the references to Christianity.

Many copies of the original manuscript were probably made, and in this new form *Beowulf* again went on its way through the country. Some, though not many, of the people had learned to read by this time, so a few could read it for themselves. But most of the manuscripts (which were too costly for any but the very rich to buy) went to the monasteries or to the minstrels in the service of a great noble or a king.

Only one out of all the copies that we believe were made



has come down to us. Scholars think that this copy was made by a monk who lived in a monastery in the South of England, and who made some slight alterations in the form of some of the words, according to the southern usage. For long years the manuscript must have lain unnoticed on the shelves of the library, along with others that the industrious monks had made. The Norman Conquest had caused the songs of the fighting-men to go out of fashion. The Normans did not want to hear about the rough struggles of those early days. More than five centuries passed, and changes of all sorts, for good and for evil, came to the monastery, but still the manuscripts upon this dusty shelf remained undisturbed. At last, in the sixteenth century, the monasteries were dissolved, and their treasures were scattered. Many manuscripts were lost, many were destroyed or defaced. Many, as we know from discoveries made later, were used in the binding of new books. Some were employed for purposes far more ignoble. Men used them, Bishop Bale tells us, "some to scour their candlesticks and some to rub their boots. Some they sold to the grocers or soap-sellers, and some over sea to the bookbinders, not in small numbers, but at times whole ships full."

Some, however, were recovered by rich and generous friends of learning, who knew the value of the treasures that had been so roughly treated, and of these one of the most active was Sir Robert Cotton (born 1571). He made a diligent search for the scattered manuscripts, hunting them out from the most unlikely hiding-places, and he managed to recover a large number. Among them was the copy of *Beowulf*. These manuscripts formed the foundation of the famous library known as the Cottonian Library. Sir Robert's son and his grandson made large additions to it, and it was handed over to the State for public use in 1702. In 1730 the books were stored in Ashburnham House, Westminster. Here, during the following year, a fire broke out which seriously damaged many of them, and the precious *Beowulf* manuscript was in great danger. Fortunately parch-

ment does not burn as easily as paper does. A few holes were burned in the pages containing the last part of the poem, but the chief damage done was the charring of the edges of the leaves, which made them so brittle that a considerable part afterward crumbled away, carrying with it letters and even whole words. For a time the rescued manuscripts were sheltered in the old dormitory at Westminster; in 1753 they were transferred to the British Museum. Here scholars who were eager to study our early literature saw the copy of *Beowulf* and realized how valuable it was. They urged the authorities to do everything that skill and care could accomplish to restore and preserve it; and it is now treasured and guarded as a nation ought to treasure and guard so fine a legacy from its forefathers.



---

## *Chapter II*

### THE SINGERS OF THE CHURCH

**W**HEN the Saxons had been living in England for a little more than a hundred and fifty years there came another set of story-tellers, with another set of stories, to share with the scop's the attention of the people. These story-tellers were the priests and monks of the Roman Church, and the stories they told were drawn from the Bible and the lives of the saints. They came into England from the south and from the north. Augustine and his monks were sent by Pope Gregory direct from Rome, and they landed in Thanet and preached to the people of Kent. Columba came from Ireland, where St Patrick had taught Christianity more than a hundred years before, and he sent his missionaries through the north.

Some of the rulers of the English kingdoms accepted the new religion which these monks taught, and bade their people accept it too; and, one by one, there rose all over the country stately churches and wide-walled monasteries where men worshipped according to the Christian faith. To these churches the Saxons, in obedience to the command of their rulers, went on Sundays and holy days. It is probable that only a few of them really became Christians in the sense of understanding and believing the teaching of Christ. Most of them simply obeyed the command of the king, as they were in the habit of obeying him in other matters.

The stubborn fighting-men, with their wives and their children, went to church feeling curious and a little suspicious; but what they saw and heard there held their attention and roused them to a livelier concern in the Church and its doings. At first it was chiefly what they saw; for the services were in Latin, and many of the priests could speak the



English language only very imperfectly. But the ceremonial was made as full and as clear as possible, and the Bible stories were illustrated by little scenes acted in the church. Thus at Christmas the congregation saw Mary and Joseph in the stable, the manger cradle, the oxen, and the shepherds. On Palm Sunday there was a procession, a priest riding through the church on an ass, while choristers strewed palm branches; on Easter morning there was shown the scene at the empty sepulchre, the holy women and the angel.

As the priests learned to speak the language of the Saxons more fluently there were more stories to be told, taken from the Old as well as from the New Testament, and wherever it was possible these were illustrated by a little scene acted during one of the services of the Church. They were very different stories, most of them, from those which the scop sang in the mead-hall, though some of those taken from the Old Testament were full of the fierce fighting temper, the heroism, and the ruthlessness which the English had always loved. But to the stories of the White Christ, the great God of the new religion, Who was meek and lowly instead of proud and fierce, Who died a shameful death, and Whose death remained unavenged by His followers, the fighting-men listened with amazed, almost horrified attention. Such an idea of a god was more than they could understand—they, whose gods had been Odin the warrior and Thor with his monstrous hammer. Even Balder, who had been the gentlest among their gods, sweet-tempered and kind and a little like the White Christ, had never shown himself meek under injury, and when he was treacherously slain his followers had taken a fearful vengeance. The very strangeness of the new idea captured their attention, and made them curious to hear more of the Christian teaching.

References to the new religion began to creep into the songs that the fighting-men made; we have seen how such references crept into *Beowulf*. A new spirit entered our literature, and has remained in it ever since. From that day



to our own there has been scarcely one great English work, in poetry or in prose, that has not shown in one way or another the influence of the religion of Christ.

Slowly the teaching of the Christian priests spread through the country, and more and more of those Saxons who had agreed only formally at first became earnest believers. Great monasteries were built by the rich and devout, and English monks were found to fill them. There was one large and splendid monastery built in 657 at Streoneshalh, which we now call Whitby. It stood on the wildest part of the Yorkshire coast, where the river Esk flows between two great headlands to the sea, and behind it stretched the wide purple moors. The monastery, which was for both men and women, had been built by Hilda, a daughter of the royal house of Northumbria, who afterward became its abbess, and under her rule it waxed famous all through the land.

Among the many lay brethren and servants who helped in the work of this great abbey was a certain man named Cædmon, whose duty it was to look after the cattle. One evening when he and his fellows were gathered at supper the harp was passed round, as the custom was at such times, that each in his turn might sing a song to the company. Cædmon could not make a song of his own, and he knew none of the gleemen's store, and so, when he saw that his turn was nearly come, he stole away from the feast (as he had often done from other feasts before this one) and went into the stable with the cattle; and there he lay down and fell asleep.

Then as he slept

there stood by him in a dream a man who saluted him, and greeted him, calling on him by name, "Cædmon, sing me something." Then he answered and said, "I cannot sing anything, and therefore I came out from this feast and retired here, since I know not how to sing." Again he who spoke to him said, "Yet you shall sing." Then said Cædmon, "What shall I sing?" He said, "Sing to me the beginning of all things."<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Translated by J. A. Giles.



Then Cædmon at once began to sing, putting into verse, according to the Saxon fashion, the story of the creation of the world.

When he awoke in the morning he remembered all that had happened in his dream and the poem he had made; and he found, too, that the power was still with him, and that he could go on making verses, telling more of the Bible story. He was filled with surprise at the wonderful gift that had been given him, and he went to the steward and told him all that had happened. The steward led him to the Abbess Hilda, who heard his story with amazement. She called together her monks, and afterward all the best scholars of Northumbria came to hear the song that the unlearned neatherd had made. All were agreed that a gift had been bestowed upon Cædmon by God Himself, and the Abbess urged him to enter the monastery and devote his life to the work which the Lord had so clearly given him to do. So he did, and in the monastery he was taught by the learned monks the Scriptures and the doctrines of the Church; and "all that he could learn by listening he pondered in his heart, and, ruminating like some clean beast, he turned it into the sweetest of songs. His song and his music were so delightful to hear that even his teachers wrote down the words from his lips and learned them."

Here is a translation of Cædmon's description of the Flood:

The Lord sent  
Rain from heaven, and also amply let  
The well-brooks throng on the world,  
From every vein. The torrent streams  
Dark-sounded, the seas rose  
Over their shore walls: strong and stern was  
He who o'er the waters swayed, who covered and  
o'erwhelmed  
The sinful sons of middle earth  
With the dark wave; men's natal lands,  
Their dwellings, ravaged; their mind's crimes avenged  
The Creator on men: the sea griped fiercely  
On the fated folk. For forty days,  
And nights as many, the punishment was stern,



Fatally grim to men: the king of glory's  
Waves drove the lives of the impious  
From their carcasses. Flood covered all  
(Rough under heaven) the high mountains  
Over the wide ground, and raised afloat  
The ark from earth, and with it the nobility  
Whom blessed the Lord himself  
Our Creator, when he closed up the ship.  
Then rode at large under the skies,  
Over the orb of ocean, that house most excellent  
Fared with its store; gushing streams might not  
The wave-faring, horrors of the water  
Furiously touch; but them the holy God  
Conducted and preserved.<sup>1</sup>

Cædmon, we are told,

endeavoured to draw men away from the love of wickedness and to excite them to the love and diligent practice of well-doing. For he was a very religious man and humbly subject to the rules of regular discipline, but inflamed with a zeal of great fervour against those who would act contrary. Wherefore also he made a fair ending of his life.<sup>2</sup>

Long before Cædmon died there were scribes busily at work in the Abbey of Whitby making copies of his poems, and many of these copies they probably passed on to other monasteries, who gave them in exchange copies of other works—mostly of Greek or Latin manuscripts brought from Rome—that they had made. Soon the poem was well known by many monks up and down the country; but the people in general knew little about it. Few of them could read it for themselves, and neither scop nor gleeman counted it among his songs.

There was another Saxon poet, named Cynewulf, who lived nearly a hundred years later than Cædmon. We do not know very much about him, but it is believed that when he was young he was a scop in the Court of one of the Saxon kings, and led a gay and thoughtless life. Then, in a dream, he saw a vision of the Cross of Christ, and this dream made of him a devout and earnest Christian, anxious only to

<sup>1</sup> Translated by B. Thorpe.

<sup>2</sup> Translated by J. A. Giles.



spread the true faith among his fellows. In one of his later poems he wrote:

I am old, and ready to depart, having woven wordcraft and pondered deeply in the darkness of the world. Once I was gay in the hall and received gifts, appled gold and treasures. Yet was I buffeted with care, fettered by sins, beset with sorrows, until the Lord of all might and power bestowed on me grace and revealed to me the mystery of the holy Cross. Now know I that the joys of life are fleeting, and that the judge of all the world is at hand to deal to every man his doom.

After this vision Cynewulf wrote many poems about the religion he had learned to love. He wrote *Crist*, which is in three parts, and tells how Christ came to earth, how He ascended to heaven, and how He will come again a second time on the Day of Judgment. He wrote *Elene*, which tells the legend of the finding of the true Cross on which Christ was crucified; and he wrote several others. The finest of all is *The Dream of the Rood*, in which he tells of a vision that came to him of the Lord on the Cross. The Cross was wreathed all round with light and covered with gold. Jewels were set in it, and it was guarded by angels. He tells how the Cross spoke to him and told him that it had been hewed from a forest tree, carried away by strong men, and set up on a mount. There it saw the Lord, "the Hero young," armed for war. "Strong and staid of mood stepped he on the gallows high." The Cross wished to bow itself, or to burst asunder or to fell the enemies of Christ, but the Lord forbade, and it dared not go against His word. It saw the nails going through Christ's hands and feet, and the piercing of His side, it saw the darkness fall and the mourning of all nature. Then it saw the body taken from its arms, and laid to rest.

Cædmon and Cynewulf were the two great Christian poets of the Saxons. For many years the pagan poetry and the Christian poetry lived on in England side by side, and only as the spirit of Christianity spread over the land did they blend and become one.



---

## *Chapter III*

### THE MONKS AND THEIR BOOKS

**B**y the middle of the seventh century many monasteries had been established in England, and each of these had quickly become the centre of the life of the district in which it was placed. The monks not only preached the Gospel to the people and held the services appointed by the Church; they were teachers, doctors, helpers, and friends to all who had need of them. Sick folk came to the monastery and were tended and healed. Poor folk came and were relieved. Every day a small crowd of hungry people stood at the monastery gate waiting for the food which a monk would presently come and distribute among them. At the monastery the poor traveller as well as the rich was cheerfully given a supper and a night's lodging; and when trouble or difficulty came upon any man in the countryside it was to the monks that he went for advice and help. Most important of all, the monks were the teachers of the people—the only teachers that England then had. Each monastery had its school, small or large. Some of the pupils were little children, some were grown men; and there was nearly always a company of youths who, having become followers of the White Christ, had entered the monastery to be trained as monks.

The Saxon novice, coming for his first day's instruction, was brought into the cloister, where his teacher awaited him. The cloister was a wide, covered passage running round the four sides of the square that was enclosed by the buildings that formed the monastery. Here the youth, fresh from the rough activities of the Saxon manor or of his father's farm, saw gathered men and boys who were working quietly, intently, and with an air of order and discipline that was



strange to him. There were monks working at carpentry, or shoe-mending, or other crafts of which the boy knew little. There were monks walking slowly to and fro, with bent head and moving lips, absorbed in silent meditation. There were groups of boys gathered round various teachers, and listening attentively to their words. But the workers at whom the boy looked with the most eager curiosity were those who sat at trestled tables in the part of the cloister where the light fell clearest. Each of them had a sheet of parchment spread out before him, a quill feather in his hand, and a small pot containing some dark fluid beside him on the table. Into this pot he dipped his quill from time to time, and then proceeded very carefully to make with it certain marks upon the blank sheet of parchment. The boy had heard something about a new art of writing that had been brought from Rome; here, as he guessed, were the men who practised it. He was shown a roll of parchment covered all over with the same kind of marks that he had seen the monks making, and was told that this was the thing he had heard of, but had never seen—a book. He was told, too, that when he had learned to read this book would give him its message as clearly as if someone had spoken it in his ear.

The eager novice set himself to work to learn these two wonderful arts of reading and writing. First there was the alphabet to be mastered—not the old runic signs, but a new alphabet such as was used at Rome and by all the great scholars of the world. Then came simple lessons in reading and writing, and now he was allowed to handle and examine manuscripts similar to those on which he had seen the monks at work. Every day he learned a little more about these marvellous books, which were opening a new world to the people of Saxon England. He was told of the precious manuscripts that were treasured in the great libraries at Rome, and of rich and generous men who had bought some of these, or had paid for copies of them to be made, for the monasteries in England. He saw manuscripts containing



some of the works of the Fathers of the Church, or of the old Latin authors, being copied by the best scribes of the monastery, and then put away among its greatest treasures. Sometimes one of these manuscripts was lent to another monastery, in exchange for one their own establishment did not possess, and when copies had been made the originals were restored. All these manuscripts were in Latin; Latin, the boy was told, was the language of the Church and of learned men all over the world; he must study it carefully if he wished to become a monk. There were some monks in England who had already mastered it so well that they were able to write in it works full of wisdom and learning. These works, too, were copied by the scribes, and preserved in the monasteries, and passed from one monastery to another. As time went on there were a few—but only a very few—manuscripts written in Anglo-Saxon. When Cædmon made his poems they were written down by the monks from his dictation. The works of Cynewulf were probably written down in the same way, and some of the lays of the scop and the gleeman. But still few manuscripts were to be found outside the monasteries, for the price was too high for ordinary folk, and kings and nobles concerned themselves little with learning.

About ten years after Cædmon had made the Abbey of Whitby famous by his poems, a great and splendid monastery arose at the mouth of the river Wear. It was called the Abbey of Wearmouth, and was dedicated to St Peter. King Egfrith of Northumbria gave the land, and Benedict Biscop, a noble Northumbrian, learned and pious, saw to its building. Eight years later he caused another great abbey to be built at Jarrow, and dedicated it to St Paul, and he spent the rest of his life in the service of these two houses of God. Five times he journeyed to Rome, and each time he came back with “a large number of books on sacred literature which he had either bought at a price or received as gifts from his friends”; and many monks worked at making copies of these. The libraries of the two monasteries became famous all over the



kingdom. Crowds of pupils came to the schools that were established there, eager to be taught by the monks who had these precious manuscripts in their keeping; and the monks were as enthusiastic as their pupils, so the schools grew and flourished.

In the year 680 there came from his home at Wearmouth to the school of St Paul's a little boy called Bede, just seven years old, to be the pupil of the good monks. He was a happy, gentle-natured child, with merry, affectionate ways that made him a favourite with his teachers and with his companions. He was eager to learn, quick and clever, and very diligent, so that very soon he became wonderfully learned for his age, and the pride of his teachers. Year after year he stayed at the monastery, never seeming to want change, or to see something of the world outside its walls. He took great delight in all his duties—in studying the Scriptures, singing in the church, reading, writing, keeping the daily discipline of his order. When he was nineteen he was ordained a deacon, and he went happily on, taking his part in teaching the younger pupils and in the services of the abbey church; and in his thirtieth year he became a priest. He was always busy, studying with great care the manuscripts in the library, and writing text-books for his pupils, and treatises on all sorts of subjects—on astronomy, physics, music, grammar, rhetoric, medicine, arithmetic. Yet he was always ready to be the friend and helper of the lads he taught. They adored him, every one of them, for his kindness and his sunny temper, and the spirit he put into his teaching. They were a devoted band, and Bede kept them happily busy with the same quiet, studious occupations that had filled his own youth. They copied his manuscripts and took down at his dictation notes for his great works.

The greatest of these works was *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. Bede began it when he was over fifty years old, and he spent years of labour upon it. He searched out and studied all the records kept by the Church in England from the time of the ancient Britons. He took down from the lips of many bishops and priests all that they could tell him



of the Church in their own day. He collected traditions and examined witnesses, and tried in every way to make his account as full and accurate as possible.

The book was written in Latin, but it was translated into Anglo-Saxon in the next century, and it has been translated into English many times since. It is a delightful book, full of fine stories, beautifully and simply told. We have to thank this quiet, industrious monkish chronicler for preserving for us many incidents in our country's history of which but for him we should have known nothing. He tells of the martyrdom of St Alban, and of the clear spring that gushed out at the feet of the saint to give him drink when he was thirsty; of how Augustine and his monks came to England, and how, as they entered Canterbury,

after their manner, with the holy Cross, and the image of our Sovereign Lord and King, Jesus Christ, they in concert sang this litany: "We beseech Thee, O Lord, in all Thy mercy, that Thy anger and wrath be turned away from this city, and from the holy house, because we have sinned. Hallelujah!"<sup>1</sup>

It is Bede who tells the story of St Gregory and the fair-haired English boys in the market at Rome, who, the Pope said, should be called angels rather than Angles. He tells of the loyal knight Lilla, who received in his own body the assassin's poisoned dagger that was meant for King Edwin, his master, and of how this same King Edwin in his youth was delivered from the treachery of Redwald of East Anglia, and was promised help from heaven in a vision, through which vision he became a Christian. It is in *The Ecclesiastical History*, too, that we find the beautiful little parable spoken when the King of Northumbria and his chief men debated whether they would receive the teaching of the Christian monk Paulinus or no. It was spoken by one of the King's councillors:

"The present life of man, O King, seems to me, in comparison of that time which is unknown to us, like the swift flight of a sparrow through the room wherein you sit at supper in winter, with your commanders and ministers, and a good fire in the midst,

---

<sup>1</sup> The passages quoted from Bede are translated by J. A. Giles.



while the storms of rain and snow prevail abroad; the sparrow, I say, flying in at one door and immediately out at another, whilst he is within is safe from the wintry storm; but after a short space of fair weather, he immediately vanishes out of your sight, from one window to another. So this life of man appears for a short space, but of what went before, or what is to follow, we are utterly ignorant. If therefore this new doctrine contains something more certain, it seems justly to deserve to be followed."

The last work that Bede undertook was the translation of the Gospel of St John into Anglo-Saxon. In the spring-tide of the year 734 he was working busily and happily upon it, his pupils helping him. But a fortnight before Easter he felt his strength beginning to fail, and knew that death was coming very swiftly upon him. He did not complain, and he was still to all in the monastery the same gay and kindly teacher, the same wise leader, ready with help and counsel, that he had been for so long. His pupils watched him with sad and anxious hearts; and as they saw him grow weaker day by day they could not, as he did, keep their faces brave and serene. Often as the lessons went on the weary teacher's breath came with pain and difficulty, and the lads could not keep back their tears. The bright spring days passed, and still Bede struggled on, for he had set his heart on finishing this last piece of work and leaving to the England he loved a complete version, that the simplest could understand, of the Gospel of Christ's beloved disciple.

A few days before Ascensiontide his sickness increased, yet still he went cheerfully on, bidding his pupils "Learn with what speed you may, I know not how long I may last." The closing day of his life is described by Cuthbert, one of his pupils, who was with him to the last, in a letter to his friend Cuthwin. "And in the shining of the morn," he says,

that is, at the fourth hour, he diligently charged us to write what we had begun; and this was done unto the third hour. But from the third hour we walked in procession with the relics of the saints, as the custom of the day demanded. There was, however, one of us with him who said to him, "Most beloved master, there is yet one chapter wanting, and it seems to be troubling you to ask you



more." Then he said, "It is no trouble. Take your pen and mend it, and write quickly." And he did so. Moreover at the ninth hour he said to me, "I have some things of value in my chest—that is, pepper, napkins, and incense; but run quickly, and bring the priests of our monastery to me, that I also may distribute to them such gifts as God has given me. The rich indeed of this world aim at giving gold, silver, and whatsoever is precious, but I will give with much charity and joy to my brethren what God hath given me." And this I did with fear and in haste. And he addressed each one, admonishing and entreating them to say Masses and prayers for him, which they readily promised to do. Moreover, all bewailed and wept, chiefly because he had said they should see his face no more in this world; but they rejoiced in that he said, "It is time that I should return to Him Who made me, Who created me, Who formed me out of nothing. I have lived a long time. The good Judge hath well ordained my life for me. The time for me to be free is at hand, for indeed my soul much desires to behold my King Christ in His beauty." These and many other things he spoke, and passed the day in cheerfulness until the evening. And the aforesaid boy said, "Most beloved Master, one sentence is still unwritten." Then he said, "Write it quickly." After a little while the boy said, "The sentence is finished now." Then he said, "It is well. You have spoken the truth. It is finished. Take my head in your hands, because I have great delight in sitting opposite my holy place, in which I was wont to pray, in order that I also sitting may be able to call upon my Father." And then on the pavement of his cell while he was saying, "Glory to the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit," he breathed forth his last breath from his body, and so departed to the heavenly Kingdom.

Not every monastery had a leader as wise, as tender, as learned, as happily serene as this much-loved monk of Jarrow, but in every monastery there were men who loved the ways of quietness and peace, and were eager to learn and eager to teach. In Saxon times, and on through the Middle Ages, the monastery was the only place where a man who cared for learning might lead the life that pleased him. In the monasteries almost alone books were read, and loved, and carefully preserved until the time came when the people outside had learned to value and desire them. They lost many of their treasures in troubled times, when invaders, or rioters, or tyrannical rulers despoiled them, but enough remained to show to later ages what our early literature was like, and what manner of men they were who made it.



---

## *Chapter IV*

### THE GROWTH OF A LEGEND

**W**HILE the victorious Saxons had been building up the kingdom of England the remnant of the Britons had been living in the mountainous districts of the West, in Wales and in Cornwall, to which their conquerors had driven them. It was natural that in their exile they should think longingly of the land they had lost, and dream of the time when they should win it back. They talked over the battles they had fought with the invader, and the bravery their race had shown against terrible odds; and they praised and magnified the deeds of those who in the long, fierce struggle had checked the Saxon hordes for a time, and fought like heroes for Britain. Stories were told about these heroes, and the stories had the wild, poetic grace that was the gift of the Britons, as of all the Celtic peoples. From father to son the tales were handed down, and they helped to keep up the fierce resentment against the foreigner. Even when many generations had come and gone, and the feud was dying out, the tales still remained to stir the hearts of the young folk by the thought of what had been done by their fathers.

The greatest of all these heroes was King Arthur, a British prince who had lived in the sixth century. History tells us almost nothing about this Arthur; yet there is no legend in all Europe—not even that of the great Charlemagne—that has flourished as strongly and spread as widely as this, which deals with the doings of an obscure British prince. We know that in 520 there was a battle fought at Mount Badon, near Bath; that in this battle the Britons were victorious, checking Cedric the Saxon leader for a time in his march toward the West; and that the name of the British leader in this battle was said to be Arthur. It is easy to understand how the



triumphant Britons, delivered as they believed out of the hand of a cruel enemy, broke forth into rapturous praises of the courage and skill that had led them to victory. For fifty years the Britons held back at this point the advance of the invaders, and through all that time the fame of Arthur grew. When at length the Saxons broke through the British defences, and extended their great kingdom of Wessex to the Bristol Channel, men mourned for Arthur, and longed that he might come again to lead them.

They longed so earnestly for his coming, and felt so certain that if he were there all would be well, that by and by they began to persuade themselves that he was not really dead. He was resting, they said, in a magical sleep, and some day, when his people's need was sorest, he would come to their help. As the years went by the story grew, and Arthur became for the Britons, not only a great hero, but an enchanted prince, stronger, and braver, and more majestic than any mortal man could ever be. There were many stories told in Wales of other heroes than Arthur, but now the people began to connect one after another of these stories with him, giving to him the good deeds that had been done by many heroes, or giving them to an imaginary hero whom they called a knight of his Court. In this way the number of his followers was constantly growing, and marvellous tales were told of them, so that sometimes the deeds of Arthur's knights overshadowed the deeds of Arthur himself. The Welsh had a strong belief in fairies and magicians and wonders of all kinds, and they could make beautiful stories to express their ideas. They made many such stories about Arthur.

One of these stories, called *Kilhugh and Olwen*, I will tell you at the end of this chapter. We think that it was made, or at least parts of it were made, during the seventh century, and that it was added to as time went on. It was probably written down some time during the twelfth century.

The first mention of Arthur that we find in any book comes in the *History of the Britons* written by Nennius the Welshman



about the year 800. This man, when he set himself to work to make a history of the people, searched out every record and story that was then in existence. "I have," he said, "gathered together all I could find, not only in the Roman annals, but also in the chronicles of holy fathers . . . and in the annals of the Irish and English, and in our native traditions." He tells how Arthur fought against the English, and led the people in twelve battles. In one of these battles he "bore the image of the Holy Virgin Mary on his shoulders, and the pagans were put to flight with great slaughter." In the great battle of Mount Badon, he says, "nine hundred and sixty men fell before Arthur's single onset."

When the Normans came to England they already knew a good deal about the legends concerning Arthur; they had heard them from the Bretons, who were of the same race as the Welsh and held the same faith in the great king. In England they found more legends and records, and these interested them very much. Geoffrey of Monmouth, a Welsh monk, says that Walter Calenius, Archdeacon of Oxford, gave him a book which he called the *British Book*, and requested him to translate and publish it. In this book was collected a large number of records concerning the early history of Britain, and especially those concerning King Arthur; and Geoffrey says that he did as his friend desired him, and made out of the material that had been given him his famous *History of the Kings of Britain*.

We are not sure whether Geoffrey's tale of the *British Book* is true. It may very well be, although no one else seems ever to have heard of the book, and no one has been able to find any trace of it. But he must have got his facts from somewhere, since it is not likely that he made it all up; and the story that he tells of King Arthur is just what we might have imagined the legend to have become during the three hundred years between the time of Nennius and the time of Geoffrey himself.

He begins with the coronation of Arthur when he was



fifteen years old, and tells us how at once the young king went out and gained one victory after another over the Saxons. At the battle of Mount Badon

Arthur himself, dressed in a breast-plate worthy of so great a king, places on his head a golden helmet engraved with the semblance of a dragon. Over his shoulders he throws his shield called Priwen, on which a picture of Holy Mary, mother of God, constantly recalled her to his memory. Girt with Caliburn, a most excellent sword, and fabricated in the Isle of Avalon, he graces his right hand with the lance named Ron.<sup>1</sup>

After the victory of Mount Badon Arthur travels northward, and wins a great victory over the Picts and Scots; then he takes ship for Norway and conquers that country. He marries Guennhara, a lady of Roman family; he crosses to Ireland and conquers it, then to Iceland; and having conquered that country also he returns home and spends twelve years in peace.

Next he proceeds to Normandy, which he subdues, and then conquers the northern provinces of France. Returning to England, he finds that the Pope has sent to demand tribute. He refuses to pay it, gathers a large army, and sets out for Italy, leaving his queen and his nephew Modred to govern the country. On the way he kills an enormous giant who had trimmed his mantle with the beards of the kings he had slain. Arthur marches through France, subduing it as he goes, fights and wins a great battle with the Romans, and is advancing on Rome when news comes to him that his nephew Modred has turned traitor and has seized his crown. He hurries back, and defeats the army that Modred brings against him. He advances to Winchester, where a second battle takes place. Modred is slain, and Arthur himself, being mortally wounded, is carried off to the Isle of Avalon.

Geoffrey of Monmouth's book, written in Norman-French, was read not only in England, but all over the Continent, and the legend of King Arthur spread through many lands. At home it was more firmly believed in than ever. We read that

<sup>1</sup> Translated by J. A. Giles.



in 1113 there was a riot at Bodmin, in Cornwall, because a monk of that place refused to admit that Arthur still lived.

Other writers took up the story; and each added to it new features. Wace, a Norman, introduced the Round Table, at which all Arthur's knights sat. Layamon, an English monk of Worcester, gave a great deal more detail about this Round Table. It was "a board wondrous fair, at which sixteen hundred men and more might sit," yet, in spite of its size, Arthur could carry it with him as he rode, and set it up wherever he willed. He tells us also many more details concerning Arthur's death, and how he passed to the Isle of Avalon.

There came from the sea a short boat, borne on the waves, and two women therein, wondrously arrayed; and they took Arthur anon and bare him quickly, and softly laid him down, and fared forth away. . . . The Britons believe yet that he is alive, and dwelleth in Avalon, with the fairest of all elves, and ever yet the Britons look for Arthur's coming.<sup>1</sup>

As you go on through the history of English literature you will find this legend of Arthur appearing again and again, and growing and changing according to the fashion of the time. Norman-French writers told the story, and introduced into it the customs of chivalry. A religious element came into it when, in the early thirteenth century, the old stories about the Quest of the Holy Grail—that is, the search for the cup which was used by Our Lord at the Last Supper and was said to have been brought to England by Joseph of Arimathea—were added. The story of each of the knights was developed, and many legends grew up about the central figure. King Arthur has never lost his interest for Englishmen, and great writers, even of our own day, have turned to his story with fresh delight and interest.

### THE STORY OF KILHUGH AND OLWEN

King Kilydd was a kinsman of King Arthur, and to him and his wife, Queen Golendyd, was born a fair son, whom they

<sup>1</sup> Translated by J. A. Giles.



called Kilhugh. When Kilhugh was yet a child his mother the Queen lay sick unto death. And she said to the King, "Let no flower, neither herb, grow upon my grave. Until you shall see there a briar with two blossoms, wed not another wife, I charge you." So the King promised. And for seven long years he took heed that no green thing should spring from the Queen's grave. But at the end of the seventh year he forgot; and when he passed that way coming home from the chase, lo! a briar with two blossoms had grown up there.

So Kilydd took a second wife, the widow of another king. And when he brought her home to his castle her stepson, Kilhugh, came to greet her. And she said, "Fair youth, never shalt thou wed until thou seek the hand of Olwen, the daughter of Thornogre Thistlehair, the Chief of the Giants." For she knew that great perils and many awaited the wooers of that maid. But Kilhugh knew it not; and at the sound of Olwen's name he felt love stir in his heart. And when he had told these things to his father, King Kilydd told him to go to the Court of his kinsman, King Arthur, and seek his aid.

So Kilhugh rode forth. His bridle was a chain of gold, his housings were of goodly purple, adorned at the four corners with golden apples. And when he was come to King Arthur's Court, and stood in the presence of the King and his knights, he told them that he had come to ask their help in finding and winning Olwen, the daughter of Thornogre Thistlehair. But neither Arthur nor any of his knights had heard of her.

The King, however, sent messengers throughout his dominions in quest of Olwen, daughter of Thornogre Thistlehair; but though they sought diligently, they could find no trace of her. The heart of Kilhugh was heavy within him at these tidings, and he spoke bitter words to his kinsman the King. Then Sir Kay, one of the knights, rebuked him for his bitter words, and swore to go forth with him in person, never to return until he had found Olwen. And so swore five other valiant knights, Sir Bedivere, the fleet of foot, Sir Uriel, who understood the speech of all men and all beasts, Sir Gawain,



the invincible, Sir Peregrine, the skilful path-finder, and, lastly, Merlin, the weaver of spells.

The seven knights rode forth together, and after a time they saw a great castle afar off. And the harder they rode, the farther it seemed from them. On the third day, however, it ceased to flee as they went forward. And so they came to a wide plain before the castle, and there were innumerable sheep grazing, and a tall herdsman dressed in sheepskins watching them, and beside him a fierce hound, which with its breath could scorch up all the trees and shrubs for many miles about. The hound did them no hurt, for Merlin, the weaver of spells, cast an enchantment upon it. And so the seven knights were able to draw near the herdsman, and to speak fair and courteous words to him. And he told them how he was Thornogre Thistlehair's own brother, but had been robbed of all his lands by the Chief of the Giants. When he heard that Kilhugh had come to seek the hand of Olwen he urged him to return whence he had come, since no man might woo her and live. Moreover, his wife was the sister of Kilhugh's mother, and he was loth to see his nephew in peril. Kilhugh paid no heed to these warnings. He gave his newly found uncle a golden ring as a token of goodwill, and after the herdsman had gone before to tell his wife of the coming of the seven knights all that goodly company dismounted before his hut and went within. And the herdsman's wife told them that every Saturday evening Olwen came thither to wash her hair, and that she left all her rich jewels in the water every time, and never asked for them back again. After they had supped their hostess opened a great stone chest by the hearth, and out stepped a fair boy, with golden locks. Three-and-twenty of her sons had been slain by Thornogre Thistlehair, and this, the youngest and last remaining, she was fain to hide, lest he too should perish. "Pity it were," said Sir Kay, "that so goodly a youth should never learn the lore of knighthood. Let him come with me, and I swear that he shall not be slain unless I too am slain."



Thereat was mighty rejoicing in the herdsman's hut, and, at the earnest prayer of the knights, the herdsman's wife sent a message to Olwen, begging her to come forthwith unto that place. And Olwen came. She was clad in flame-coloured silk, with a collar of red gold about her neck. More yellow were her locks than the blossom of the broom, and her skin whiter than the foam of the sea. Her hands were like the flowers of the wild anemone, and her eyes were brighter than a falcon's eyes. Four white clover-blossoms sprang up wherever she set her feet; wherefore she was called Olwen of the White Footprints.

Kilhugh loved her from the moment that he saw her; and he besought her to come with him and be his bride. Olwen, though she was nothing loth, answered that she might not wed without her father's leave, and that his leave might be hard to get, because Thornogre Thistlehair knew that upon his daughter's wedding-day he himself must die. "If," said Olwen, "you come to my father and ask my hand of him, promise all that he shall demand of you, or it may go ill both with you and me."

Next day the seven knights presented themselves before Thornogre Thistlehair, and a terrible person he was. His eyebrows were so long and shaggy that he could not even see the newcomers till his servants had come and raised the heavy fringes from his eyes. By his side were three darts steeped in poison. The knights greeted him courteously, and showed how they were come from King Arthur's Court to ask the hand of Olwen for Kilhugh, the son of Kilydd. Thornogre bade them depart and come again on the morrow. And even as they were departing he cast after them one of his poisoned darts. But Sir Bedivere caught it and flung it back again, and it smote the giant upon the knee. "Woe unto ye all!" cried Thornogre Thistlehair. "I shall walk ever the worse for this!"

The next day the seven came before him again, and he said that they must depart and return on the morrow, after he had



taken counsel with Olwen's four great-grandfathers and four great-grandmothers. And even as they were departing he cast after them another of his poisoned darts. But Merlin caught it, and flung it back again, and it wounded the giant in the breast. "Woe unto ye all!" cried Thornogre Thistlehair. "I shall have a catch in my breath hereafter for this!"

The next day they came yet again, and he cast the third poisoned dart at them. But Kilhugh caught it, and flung it back, and it struck the giant in the eye.

"Woe unto ye all!" cried Thornogre Thistlehair. "Now will mine eyes water, and my head turn, and at every change of the moon giddiness will come upon me!"

On the fourth day the seven knights returned, and spoke stern words and hard unto the giant, bidding him give a plain answer to their question. Then said Thornogre Thistlehair, "Kilhugh shall wed Olwen if he will do what I demand of him. Firstly, he must go to yonder hill, make the soil ready for the plough, plough it, sow it, and raise a crop of ripe grain, all in one day."

"That will be easy," returned Kilhugh.

Many other things did the ogre demand of him, even to the number of forty, and ever Kilhugh made the same reply. For he trusted that his kinsman, King Arthur, and his friends the six knights would help him. One of the tasks was to bring to the ogre the nine bushels of flax-seed sown in a certain field, and no single seed must be lacking. Here another knight, Prince Guyther, was able to be of service to Kilhugh. For Prince Guyther had saved an anthill from destruction in a heath-fire, and the grateful ants, at his request, collected all the flax-seeds, even to the very last grain. The hardest of the strange things which Thornogre Thistlehair demanded was that Kilhugh should bring him the jewelled scissors and the comb that lay between the ears of the terrible Wild Boar of Ireland, Turch Truyth.

To King Arthur did Kilhugh appeal for aid, and he did not appeal in vain. The King and his knights girt them for the



chase, and sailed over the sea to Ireland. And there they did many valorous deeds, worthy of remembrance, but they might not slay Turch Truyth, for there was a spell upon the beast, and neither steel, nor flame, nor water would avail against him. Sir Uriel spoke fair words to the Boar, begging him to yield up the scissors and the comb that were between his ears, but Turch Truyth paid no heed to fair words. "Not only," said the Boar, "shall Arthur never see either my scissors or my comb, but I and my young ones will come and harry his kingdom."

At dawn, next morning the King and his knights arose, thinking to hinder Turch Truyth from fulfilling his threat, but lo! in the light of the rising sun they saw the Boar and his young ones swimming toward Britain. Arthur followed fast, but before he could reach the shore these fell beasts had wrought dire havoc far and near. All through Wales went Turch Truyth, wasting and ravaging the fair green land. And presently he reached the borders of Devon and Cornwall, and there Arthur came up with him, on the edge of the Severn. And as he thrust his way up the bank the knights caught him by the forelegs, and Sir Mabon seized the scissors from between his ears, and Sir Kenneder seized the comb. Yet the fell beast broke from their hands, and fled away toward Cornwall. King Arthur pursued him, with his fleet hounds Raceapace and Boundoft, and after a chase over many miles of land and water they drove him down to the seashore. And Turch Truyth plunged into the waves, and the two hounds followed, and so swimming hard they all three vanished from the eyes of men, nor were they ever beheld again.

And at last, when all the tasks demanded by Thornogre Thistlehair had been accomplished, Kilhugh returned to the giant's castle and claimed his bride, Olwen of the White Footprints. And it chanced that in that hour the herdsman's youngest son, he whom Sir Kay had befriended, stood forth and said, "Thornogre Thistlehair, three-and-twenty brothers of mine hast thou cruelly slain, and my father's heritage hast

## THE GROWTH OF A LEGEND

---

thou taken from him. Therefore thou shalt surely die!" And he dragged him by his long hair to the battlements of the castle, and there cut off his head.

And thus did Kilhugh, the son of Kilydd, win Olwen of the White Footprints, the daughter of Thornogre Thistlehair.



---

## *Chapter V*

### STORIES FOR THE PEOPLE

**F**OR a long time after the Conquest the common people had no other stories than those which the Saxon gleeman sang as he travelled from town to town and from village to village. These were the old Saxon stories of monsters and terrors, and rough hand-to-hand fighting, such as had been told to their fathers and their grandfathers, with perhaps a few new ones that the gleeman had made about the battle of Hastings, and about Hereward, and Waltheof, and other Saxon heroes who had stood out against the Norman conquerors. But gradually there came a change. Some of the Norman minstrels of the commoner sort, who could not win much favour in the castles of the nobles, came to join the Saxon gleemen on the road, and brought their romances with them; and from the mixture of Norman and Saxon came a new set of stories for the people.

The Norman minstrels were quick and lively fellows, who did not travel soberly like the gleemen, but came into a village dancing and singing, peacocks' feathers in their caps, and ribbons streaming gaily from many parts of their bright, fantastic garments. Out came the people from the farms and the cottages to listen to them. Most were Saxons, but some were Normans, for a train of workmen and artificers had come from overseas with their masters. The Saxons could understand only a little of the lays the minstrel sang, but they could understand the tumbling, and juggling, and dancing, and the merry tunes on the vielle—the small stringed instrument that he carried—with which he was careful to begin his entertainment. And when it came to the story, the minstrel used his small store of English words so skilfully, and eked them out so dramatically with gestures, and nods, and changes of coun-



tenance, that the Saxon managed to gather something of his meaning, and was ready enough to put a small coin, or an egg, or a lump of bread or bacon into the hat when it came round. Each time the minstrel came he knew more of their language and they knew a little more of his, and so they grew to understand one another better and better, until the time came—about the end of the thirteenth century—when English, with many of the old Saxon forms altered and with a large number of Norman-French words introduced into it, became once more the language of the country.

At first the minstrels on the road sang to the people the same romances that they and their masters had been used to sing to the knights and ladies in the castle hall. But they found that these were too long-drawn-out, too full of high-flown love-making and tedious discussions, to please the taste of way-side audiences. So they shortened them, and made them move more quickly, and put in more fighting, with the hard knocks and wonderful deeds of valour that the Saxons loved. They put in comic scenes also, for the stern and sober Saxons had caught some of the gaiety of their Norman neighbours, and had learned to laugh more freely and more lightheartedly than they had ever done before.

It was not long before the distinction between the Saxon gleeman and the Norman minstrel died out. Each took a little of the other's methods, until the race of singers and storytellers was formed that was so important in the life of the country all through the Middle Ages. Before the end of the thirteenth century there were romances in English with which the minstrel could delight his audiences. Most of these were founded on the French romances, altered to suit the native taste. Some may be considered as the original work of English poets, and the most famous of these is the romance of *Sir Gawayne and the Grene Knight*.

We do not know the name of the poet who wrote *Gawayne*. From various references in the poem scholars believe that the writer belonged to the North of England, was in some way



connected with a noble family, and had been educated for a monk, but none of these things is certain. At all events, he was a true poet. *Sir Gawayne* is one of the many stories woven round Arthur's knights. It tells how one New Year's Day when they were feasting at Camelot there came to them a strange knight clad in green armour and riding a green horse. The newcomer invited any one of the knights to strike him a blow on condition that one year hence that knight should seek out his challenger and take a blow in return. Sir Gawayne accepted the invitation, and dealt such a mighty stroke that the Green Knight's head rolled from his shoulders. The Green Knight, however, calmly picked it up again, and, holding it in his hand, repeated the challenge before riding away. At the end of the year Sir Gawayne, faithful to his vow, set out in quest of the Green Chapel where the enchanted warrior was to await him. But he could find no such place. At last on Christmas Eve he reached a castle, where he begged shelter for the night. The lord of the castle received him courteously, told him that the Green Chapel was not far distant, and invited him to share their Christmas festivities, which Sir Gawayne was doubtless very glad to do.

On the three last days of the year this lord went a-hunting. He did not take his guest with him, however. It was agreed between them that Sir Gawayne should stay at home with the lady of the castle while the lord rode forth, and that each should give to the other whatever he had won during the day. On the first evening, when the lord returned, Sir Gawayne duly gave him the kiss which he had won from the lady. On the second evening he had two kisses to give; on the third evening three. But with the three kisses the lady had bestowed on him a gift which he did *not* yield up, and that was a green lace, a magic lace, whose wearer could never come to any harm. Sir Gawayne naturally thought that this lace would be very useful to him in his encounter next day with the terrible Green Knight, so he said nothing about it, thereby breaking his word. In due course he found himself



before the Green Chapel, which was really a cave in a wilderness, and there he encountered the Green Knight. Sir Gawayne knelt to receive a blow from the warrior, and as the great battleaxe swooped down he could not help flinching a little, at which the Green Knight mocked him. A second time the axe descended without touching him, and that time Sir Gawayne neither trembled nor shrank aside. A third time it fell, and that time it wounded him slightly in the neck. Then the Green Knight revealed to the young man that he was his host, the lord of the castle, and that the kisses and the magic lace had been given to him to try his good faith. If he had yielded up the lace, the axe could not have hurt him. None the less the Green Knight declared that "as pearls are of more price than white peas, so is Gawayne of more price than other gay knights."

Other favourite romances of the time were *Havelok the Dane*, *Guy of Warwick*, *Bevis of Hampton*, and *King Horn*. All of them have English heroes, and in all of them the scene is laid in England. We will look, very briefly, at the story of King Horn.

Once, in the land of Suddenne, in the West of England, lived a king called Murry, with his wife Godhild, and his son Horn. Very fair was Horn; rain might not fall nor sun shine upon

Fayrer child than he was,  
Bryght as ever any glas,  
White as any lili flour,  
So rose red was hys colur.  
He was fayr and eke bold,  
And of fifteen wynter old.

He had twelve comrades, boys of noble birth, and of them he loved the best Athulf, who was good and true, and Fikenhild, who was false.

One summer day King Murry rode down to the seashore, and found there fifteen ships filled with fierce Saracens. He asked them what brought them to that land, and one answered boldly, "We come to fight against you and your people, and to kill all those who believe in Christ, and first of all we will kill you."



Then the King and the two knights who were with him got down from their horses, and drew their swords. They fought stoutly, but three men could do nothing against that host, and soon they were killed. Then the heathen came up into the land, killing and destroying. None was saved except such as would forswear the religion of Christ. Godhild fled into a lonely place, and lived in the shelter of a great rock, grieving much for her husband, but more for her son Horn, who had been taken captive by the heathen.

Horn and his twelve companions were prisoners, and at first, because they were so beautiful, the fierce pagans were loath to slay them. But then one of their leaders spoke out: "This Horn is strong and brave and beautiful, and in seven years' time he will have grown to be a man. Then he will seek us out and slay us in revenge for the death of his father. Let us therefore put him and his comrades in a ship, and cast them out that they may drown."

So they brought them all down to the shore and put them in a ship, and all that day and all that night the boys rowed, yet could do nothing against the strong sea that drove them where it would. Then when the dawn came Horn cried, "Friends,

"I telle you a tiding,  
I here foulés singe,  
And so the gras him springe,  
Blythe be we alive,  
Our skhip is come ryve."<sup>1</sup>

Then they leapt on shore, and Horn said to the ship, "Go now safely over the water, and when thou comest to Suddenne,

"Greet wel al my kin  
And greet wel the good  
Queen Godhild my moder  
And say to that hethen king  
Jesus Christ's witherling<sup>2</sup>  
That I whole and fere  
On land am rived here,  
And say that he shall have  
Death from my hand."

---

<sup>1</sup> shore.

<sup>2</sup> foe.

Then they wandered over the land, until they met with Ailmar, King of Westernesse. "Whence come you, noble lads? By God Who made me, I swear I have never before seen so fair a company!" Then Horn answered and told him they were come from Suddenne, and that pagans had killed their parents and friends, and had put them in a boat in which they had drifted toward that shore. "Kill us if you will," he said, "but I pray that instead you will help us."

Then the good King asked the boy his name, and he answered, "Horn." "It is well," said Ailmar; "the horn has a loud sound that goes over dale and hill.

"So shal thy name springe  
From kinge to kinge,  
And thy fayrnesse  
Throughout Westernesse,  
And the strength of thine honde <sup>1</sup>  
Throughout every land.  
Horn, thou art so swet  
I shal not thee lete." <sup>2</sup>

So they all went home to the King's hall, and he called his steward and bade him see that the youths were taught all the lore of the wood and the river, and to ride, and to play the harp. So they lived in the King's house, and Horn learned all that was taught him, and everyone loved him. The King had a daughter, Rymenhild, and she loved Horn dearly. She thought of him day and night, and presently she grew ill with her grief and pining. So she sent for Horn and told him how she loved him. And he said he loved her too, but that he was only a thrall to the King, and no fit match for a princess. Rymenhild must wed a nobler man than he. Then Rymenhild wept bitterly, so that Horn's heart failed him. He lifted her up and kissed her. "Help me," he said, "to be made a knight, then shall I be fitter to be your servant."

Then Rymenhild was glad, and she sent a message to the steward telling him to beg the King to grant knighthood to Horn. Gladly the steward went on his errand, and gladly

<sup>1</sup> hand.

<sup>2</sup> let go.



the King agreed to his request. "I will myself dub him a knight," said the King, "and he himself shall knight his twelve comrades."

So this was done. Horn was knighted, and was given a sword, and shining spurs and a white horse, and then he knighted his comrades, and a great feast was made in their honour. After the feast Horn went to Rymenhild in her bower, and she greeted him joyfully. "Now," she cried, "the time is come when you can make me your wife." But Horn answered, "First must I prove my knighthood. A knight must do great deeds for the sake of his lady ere he weds her. I will go out, and, with the help of Christ, I will win great glory. Then, if I live, I will come back to thee."

"True knight," cried Rymenhild, "I know thou wilt keep faith. Take this ring, on which is engraved my name, and wear it always and think of me; then thou needst not fear wounds, nor death from treachery. May God keep thee, and bring thee safely back."

So Horn mounted his horse and rode out, and he had not gone much more than a mile before he saw a shipload of pagans landing on the shore. He asked them why they had come, and they said to kill the people of the land. Then Horn's anger rose, and he took his sword, and

The Sarazyn he hitte so  
That his hed fell to his toe.

Then the rest gathered round him, and he slew at least a hundred. Then he took the leader's head on his sword's point, and rode back to the King, and told his tale. "Now," he said, "have I repaid thee, O King, who made me knight!" There was great rejoicing in the hall, but that night Rymenhild had an ill dream, and soon it came true, for Fikenhild, that false friend, by lying tales turned the King's anger against Horn, so that he bade him begone from his hall. So Horn took leave of Rymenhild, and charged his faithful comrade, Athulf, to guard and care for her while he was away; and then he rode



out, promising that he would return and claim her at the end of seven years.

So he rode to the harbour and hired a good ship, and set out on his voyage, and the wind drove him to the coast of Ireland, where he landed. Soon two sons of the King, Harild and Berild, met him and asked him his name. "Godmod," he answered, and they begged him to come with them to the King; and the King received him joyfully, and made him one of his company of knights.

At Christmastide the King made a feast, and in the midst of it appeared a giant. "King," he said, "pagans have arrived in your land. One of them will fight against three knights of thine, and if our man overcomes, the land shall be ours."

"Godmod and Harild and Berild shall go," said the King, but Godmod pleaded, "Let me go alone. One Christian man is enough to fight one hound." So on the morrow he went, and found the giant awaiting him. Soon the giant cried him mercy. "Cease for a while. Never have I felt such blows except from King Murry, whom I killed in Suddenne."

Then Horn, when he heard how this was his father's murderer, felt his rage rise hotly. He looked on the ring Rymenhild had given him, and then smote the giant through the heart. The pagans fled when they saw their leader fall, but Horn and the rest of the King's followers pursued them and slew them all, only, alas! Harild and Berild were killed. The King lamented sorely. "Both my heirs are gone. Stay with me now, Godmod, and marry my daughter, and be my heir."

Horn could not do this, but he promised to stay with the King until his seven years of absence from Rymenhild were ended. Then he said he would claim his reward, "and when I ask for your daughter, do not refuse her to me."

Six more years passed, and then there came a page, seeking Horn. "Far have I gone," said the page, "yet I cannot find him. I bring him a message to say that if he does not return, next Sunday must Rymenhild, who sorrows for him day and night, wed King Modi of Reynes."



“Go back,” said Horn, “and say that by the dawn of Sunday Horn will be there.”

Then he went to the King and told him all his story, and the King gathered an army for him of the bravest of the Irish knights. They took ship, and reached Westernesse on the Sunday morning. Then Horn hid his people in a wood and himself went on to King Ailmar’s hall. On the way he met a palmer, and changed clothes with him, and stained his face, and made himself look as ugly as he could. Then he went on and sat among the beggars who had gathered at the gate. He saw Rymenhild as she sat apart and wept bitterly, although it was her wedding feast, but he did not see Athulf, who was up in a tower watching and longing that at this last moment Horn might come.

The feast began, and Rymenhild, as was the custom, carried the cup to the knights and squires. Then Horn spoke to her. “Queen,” he said, “give us to drink among the first, for the beggars are athirst.” Rymenhild turned, and filled a bowl for him. “Never saw I so bold a beggar,” she said; but he answered, “I am no beggar, I am a fisher. For seven years my net has lain, and now I come to see if it has caught any fish. Drink now to Horn, for far have I come.”

Then Rymenhild’s heart grew cold as she drank, and she said, “Hast thou seen Horn?” But without answering Horn threw the ring she had given him into the cup, and said, “See now what is in thy cup.”

Rymenhild with her four maidens withdrew to her bower, and there in the cup she found the ring; so she sent a damsel for the palmer. “Tell me,” she said, “where didst thou get this ring?” “From Horn,” he said. “I met him travelling towards Westernesse, and was with him when he sickened and died.”

Then Rymenhild cried, “Heart, break now, for Horn is dead!” But Horn cried out, “I am thine own Horn! Dost thou not know me, my sweet love?” So Rymenhild’s grief was turned to joy.

Then Horn called his Irish knights, and Rymenhild called the loyal Athulf, and sent him to join them. There was a great battle, and Modi was killed, and all except King Ailmar and the twelve comrades of Horn. No vengeance did he take for Fikenhild's false tongue.

So Horn and Rymenhild were married with much rejoicing; and afterward Horn went to his father's kingdom of Suddenne and took it, and found his mother and brought her back to her home. But while he was away Fikenhild took Rymenhild by force and would have wed her; but Horn, warned by a dream, returned, and, with Athulf, rescued her, and slew Fikenhild and his followers. Then he sent to Ireland, and claimed the King's daughter as a wife for Athulf, and the King sent her as he had promised.

And Horn com to Suddenne  
To his own kin;  
Rymenhild he made ther his quene,  
So hit myhte bene.  
In trewe love they lyveden ay,  
And well they loved God's law:  
Now they be both dede,  
Christ to heovene us lead.



---

## Chapter VI

### HOW THE MONKS WROTE THE HISTORY OF ENGLAND

THERE is an old Saxon book which very few people know much about, and fewer still care to read, but which all English boys and girls ought to look upon with great pride, and study carefully. It is called *The English Chronicle*, and it tells the history of our country from the coming of Julius Cæsar to the death of Stephen in 1154. The early part was probably copied from the Latin historians, but that only takes up a few pages. The rest is the work of many writers, most of them writing about what they had actually seen or heard, or else had been told of by eyewitnesses. It is written, not in learned Latin, but in the tongue of the people. No other nation possesses anything at all like it, except the Hebrews, whose history is written in the Old Testament.

We are not quite sure exactly how or when the *Chronicle* was begun; but probably very soon after Augustine and his monks came to England the heads of the different monasteries began to keep a record of great events, especially events that had anything to do with the Church. Bede says that when he began to write his history he asked the help of various abbots and bishops in different parts of the country, and they sent him all the information they could; and it is almost certain that this information came from the monastery records.

At first, we think, the monks wrote down little more than just a list of events with their dates, with now and then a fuller account of anything specially interesting to their particular monastery. Then, gradually, they went on to a more connected account, and vivid little descriptive sketches began to make their appearance among the bare, dry facts. In the record kept at the monastery of Winchester one of the earliest



entries is under the date 755, and this tells the story of how a certain Saxon noble, named Cynewulf, who had taken the kingdom of the West Saxons from its ruler, Sebryht, fought against Cyneheard, the deposed king's brother, and was slain; and how his followers, refusing Cyneheard's offer of money and land if they would take him for their king, continued fighting until they had killed Cyneheard and all the men who were with him, save one.

King Alfred the Great when he came to the throne saw the great importance of *The English Chronicle*, and did his best to make it a real history of the country. Under his direction the monks of Winchester set to work to collect all the records they could find that told anything about the history of England from the days of Hengist and Horsa—all the old ballads and the stories that the fathers had told their sons through many generations. From these they made out a more or less connected account of what had happened since the coming of the Saxons; and, having brought the history up to their own time, they tried to keep a full and correct record of the events of each year as it passed. Other monasteries were trying to do the same thing, and from time to time one monastery borrowed the record of another and corrected its own by it, writing in anything of importance that had been left out. So between them they produced the great work to which all later writers of English history have had to go for information.

Sometimes the writers of the *Chronicle* copied out a song made among the people, or perhaps they made some of the songs themselves. The finest of these is that which tells of the victory of King Athelstan at Brunanburh in 937.

Since the sun was up  
in morning-tide  
gigantic light!  
glad over grounds,  
God's candle bright,  
eternal Lord!—  
till the noble creature  
sat in the western main  
there lay many



## THE GOLDEN ROAD IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

---

of the northern heroes  
under a shower of arrows  
Shot over shields; . . .  
With chosen troops  
throughout the day,  
the West-Saxons fierce  
press'd on the loathed bands;  
hew'd down the fugitives,  
and scatter'd the rear  
with strong mill-sharpen'd blades.  
The Mercians too  
the hard hand-play  
spared not to any  
of those that with Anlaf  
over the briny deep  
in the ship's bosom  
sought this land  
for the hardy fight.  
Five kings lay  
on the field of battle,  
in bloom of youth,  
pierced with swords.<sup>1</sup>

✓ Sometimes the *Chronicle* gives an account of curious old customs. "This year returned King Knute," it says, in 1031,

and as soon as he came to England he gave to Christ's Church in Canterbury the haven of Sandwich, and all the rights that arise therefrom, on either side of the haven; so that when the tide is highest and fullest, and there be a ship floating as near the land as possible, and there be a man standing upon the ship with a taper-axe in his hand, whithersoever the large taper-axe might be thrown out of the ship, throughout all that land the ministers of Christ's Church should enjoy their rights.<sup>1</sup>

There is a good deal about the weather in the *Chronicle*. In 1046, we are told,

after Candlemas came the strong winter, with frost and with snow, and with all kinds of bad weather, so that there was no man then alive who could remember so severe a winter as this was, both through loss of men and through loss of cattle; yea, fowls and fishes through much cold and hunger perished.<sup>1</sup>

The *Chronicle* ends with the misery that came in the reign of Stephen. "I neither can nor may tell," says the chronicler,

<sup>1</sup> Modern English version by John Earle.



all the wounds and all the pains which they [the barons] inflicted on wretched men in this land. This lasted the nineteen winters while Stephen was king; and it grew continually worse and worse. . . . Then was corn dear; and flesh, and cheese, and butter; for none was there in the land. Wretched men starved of hunger. Some had recourse to alms, who were for a while rich men, and some fled out of the land. Never yet was there more wretchedness in the land; nor ever did heathen men worse than they did; for after a time they spared neither church nor churchyard, but took all the goods that were therein, and then burned the church and all together. Neither did they spare a bishop's land, or an abbot's or a priest's, but plundered both monks and clerks; and every man robbed another who could. If two men, or three, came riding to a town all the township fled them, concluding them to be robbers. The bishops and learned men cursed them continually, but the effect thereof was nothing to them; for they were all accursed, and forsworn, and abandoned. To till the ground was to plough the sea; the earth bare no corn, for the land was all laid waste by such deeds; and they said openly that Christ slept and His saints. Such things, and more than we can say, suffered we nineteen winters for our sins.<sup>1</sup>

Long before the unhappy reign of Stephen, the task of writing the history of England had been taken up by another set of chroniclers. Norman monks had replaced the English in most of the large monasteries. The English language seemed in danger of dying out. French was the language of the Court and the nobles—even of the English nobles who wished to be considered as well bred as the Norman. Latin was still, as it always had been, the language of the Church and of learned men: and the new chroniclers wrote in Latin. They wrote clearly and vividly, and made their accounts fuller and more authoritative than the English writers had done. These Norman chroniclers were not only monks and scholars, they were important men in the world outside the monasteries. Many of them had been employed by the King in State affairs, and had spent some time at Court. They took a keen interest in public matters, and they were able to get the latest news of what was going on.

St Alban's Abbey was especially noted for its chronicle. It

<sup>1</sup> Translated by John Earle.



was a rich and important establishment, and it was on the north road to London, so that great State officials and visitors to the Court, from all parts of England and from abroad, often stayed there on their way. They brought with them the news and gossip of the Court, and the monks listened, and noted down what seemed to them interesting; and afterward they wrote out a full account in their chronicle.

By the end of the twelfth century the chronicle of St Albans had become so important that it was found necessary to appoint a special monk as historiographer, whose business it was to see that the record was accurately and carefully kept. The first of these historiographers was Roger of Wendover, and he began the chronicle which was called the *Chronica Majora*. After him came Matthew Paris, the most famous of all the chroniclers. He had been a boy in the Abbey school, and because he was so quick and clever he had been sent to the University of Paris to study. When he came back in 1217 he rose quickly in the favour of the King, and for a time he lived at the Court among the most famous men of the day.

But Court favour did not make Matthew Paris a courtier, in the sense of a sayer of smooth and flattering things to please the royal ear. He loved England, and he spoke his mind freely when any attack was made upon her liberties. He was a good Catholic, but he opposed with all his might the unlawful exactions of the Pope. He even ventured to reprove the King for not being active enough in resisting foreign interference. The clergy of England, he said, looked to their king for support, but they found him "as it were the stalk of a reed on which those who lean in confidence are wounded by the fragments."

The direct, homely style of his writings makes them read like a really interesting story, not like a dry, matter-of-fact history.

He rebukes the king as freely as he rebukes his own brethren the monks. He tells of the birth of Edward I on June 17, 1239. "At this event," he says,



all the nobles of the Kingdom offered their congratulations, and especially the citizens of London, because the child was born at London; and they assembled bands of dancers, with drums and tambourines, and at night illuminated the streets with large lanterns. . . . A great many messengers were sent to make known this event, who returned loaded with costly presents. And now the King deeply clouded his magnificence as a king, for, as the messengers returned, the King enquired of each what he had received, and those who had received least, although they brought valuable presents with them, he ordered to send them back with contempt; nor was his anger appeased till each person had given satisfactory presents at the will of the messengers. Of this a certain Norman wittily remarked, "God gave us this child, but the King sells him to us."<sup>1</sup>

A few pages after this comes an account of "a remarkable battle amongst the fishes in the sea" in 1240. "Although great and unheard-of wonders happened in this year," writes the chronicler,

we have thought it worth our while to mention in this work one more remarkable than the rest. As it is the nature of the sea to vomit up on dry land the dead bodies thrown into it, about eleven whales, besides other marine monsters, were cast up on the sea coast of England, dead, as if they had been injured in some kind of struggle—not, however, by the attacks or skill of man. The sailors and old people dwelling near the coast who had seen the wonders of the deep when following their vocation in the waters, and trafficking to distant countries, declared that there had been an unusual battle among the fishes, beasts, and monsters of the deep, which, by wounding and gnawing each other, had caused death to several; and those which had been killed had been cast ashore. One of the fishes, a monster of prodigious size, made its way into the Thames, and with difficulty passed uninjured between the pillars of the bridge; it was carried as far as a manor of the King's called Mortlake, where it was followed by a number of sailors, and at length killed, after a great deal of trouble, by innumerable blows of spears.<sup>1</sup>

All that part of the *Chronica Majora* that tells of the years between 1235 and 1253 is the work of Matthew Paris. During this time the great Abbey of St Albans was his home, although he was often commanded by the King to spend weeks, or sometimes months, at the Court. He was also sent by the Pope

<sup>1</sup> Translated by J. A. Giles.



on various missions. We may imagine him returning to the monastery after one of these absences, eager to write down all the news that he had gathered, and to look over the notes of daily events that had been taken by the monks while he had been away. No sort of news came amiss to him. He noted the state of the weather, and the quality of the harvest; he told of births, marriages, and deaths; he related quaint stories of trivial offences against the rules of the monastery, and of crimes committed by all sorts of persons; all these side by side with the account of great national events. The writing of the chronicle, in the beautiful hand he had learned when he was a boy in the abbey school, must have taken a great part of his day. He drew quaint illustrations for it also, including the picture of an elephant, "drawn from nature," the first, he says, that had been seen in the country. He also drew a picture of himself, in his monk's dress, kneeling at the feet of the Virgin and Child.

Some of Matthew Paris's work was perhaps done in a little room which, since his office was such an important one, was given him for his special use. But it is probable that he usually wrote in the scriptorium, side by side with the other monks who were doing the same kind of work. The scriptorium was a large room set apart for the copyists and others engaged in the making of books. Most of the bigger monasteries had by this time set up such a scriptorium, for a good many people besides the monks were now learning to read, and the demand for books was so great that there was not room enough in the cloister for the writers. The scriptorium at St Albans was large enough for about twenty scribes to carry on their work. They sat at tables "carefully and artificially constructed." There was a monk in charge who was called the *armarius*, and who gave out the various articles required by the writers—quills for pens, and ink of various colours, gold, silver, black, red, blue, and yellow; rulers, penknives, chalk, pumice stone for erasing words wrongly written, weights to keep down the parchment. Round the walls of the scriptorium were hung scrolls bearing

rules and directions. The chief rule was that absolute silence must be kept. If a writer wanted a book of reference he must not ask for it in words, but by signals. He held out his hand to attract the attention of the *armarius*; then, if he wanted a missal or a service book he made the sign of the Cross; for a psalter he put his hands on his head in the form of a crown, signifying King David; if he required the work of a pagan author he scratched his ear, as a dog might do, for pagans were esteemed but as dogs.

In other monasteries besides St Albans the monks were busy writing out the records which told the history of their time. All through the Middle Ages and up to the dissolution of the monasteries the work went on; and then, when the monks were driven out, there were others who were not monks ready to take up their task where these, our early chroniclers, had been forced to leave it.



---

## *Chapter VII*

### THE DRAMA OF THE CHURCH

**W**E have seen how much the Church did for our literature in these early days—how she gave us poets and historians, how she made books and taught men to read them, how she preserved for later ages treasures which without her care would have been destroyed. She had still another gift for us, and one which we should, perhaps, scarcely have expected to receive from her hands. She gave us our earliest English plays.

The missionary monks who first came to England to set up their Church in a strange land found their task a difficult one. The people they had to teach were simple and unlearned; they knew nothing of Latin, the language of the Church; and their own language was strange to most of the newcomers. The monks tried, as we have seen in a former chapter, to do by means of the eye what they could not do by the ear. They tried, in all their services, to provide the people with something to look at, and to explain what was going on by means of the actions of the priest and his attendants. On the great festivals they caused to be acted as part of the services little scenes which represented the event that was being commemorated. At Christmas the priests took the parts of Mary and Joseph watching over the Christ-Child cradled in a manger; at Easter they represented the holy women and the disciples coming to Christ's empty tomb; and so with the other festivals.

This method of teaching must have been successful, for little by little the priests enlarged upon it, and the scenes that were acted became longer, and fuller, and more carefully arranged. During the reign of Edgar, which lasted from 959 to 975, a decree was issued to the Church containing directions as to how the services were to be conducted in English



monasteries. At the first service on Easter Day the sepulchre of Christ, in which the Cross has been laid on Good Friday, is to be represented in the Church; then:

While the third lesson is being chanted let four brethren vest themselves. Let one of these, vested in an alb, enter as though to take part in the service, and let him approach the sepulchre without attracting attention, and sit there quietly with a palm in his hand. While the third respond is chanted, let the remaining three follow, vested in copes, bearing in their hands thuribles with incense, and, stepping delicately as those who seek something, approach the sepulchre. These things are done in imitation of the angel sitting on the grave and the women with spices coming to anoint the body of Jesus. When therefore he who sits there beholds the three approach him, like folk lost and seeking something, let him begin in a dulcet voice of medium pitch to sing *Quem quæritis*.<sup>1</sup> And when he has sung it to the end let the three reply in unison *Jhesu Nazarenum*.<sup>2</sup>

The angel replies, "He is not here, He is risen. Go, seek not the living among the dead"; and the three turn to the choir and say, "Alleluia! the Lord is risen!" and the one sitting on the sepulchre recites, as if recalling them, "Come, see the place where He lay."

And saying this, let him rise and lift the veil, and show them the place bare of the cross, but only the cloths laid there in which the cross was wrapped. And when they have seen this let them set down the thuribles which they bare in that same sepulchre, and take the cloth, and hold it up in the face of the clergy, and as if to demonstrate that the Lord is risen and is no longer wrapped therein, let them sing the anthem *Surrexit Dominus de sepulchro*,<sup>3</sup> and lay the cloth upon the altar. When the anthem is done, let the prior, sharing in their gladness at the triumph of our King, in that having vanquished death He rose again, begin the hymn *Te Deum laudamus*,<sup>4</sup> and, this begun, all the bells chime out together.

By scenes such as this, shown year after year as the seasons came round, the people learned the chief facts of the Gospel story, and by and by it seems to have occurred to the priests that the stories of the Old Testament might be taught in the same way. These were shown at times when no special fast

<sup>1</sup> "Whom seekest thou?"

<sup>2</sup> "The Lord is risen from the grave."

<sup>3</sup> "Jesus of Nazareth."

<sup>4</sup> "We praise thee, O God."



or festival was being observed, and as there were so many stories in the Old Testament from which scenes could be taken, the number of representations increased quickly. Sometimes on a saint's day an event in the life of the saint was shown; sometimes several scenes, telling a complete story, were joined together to make a continuous play; and at length the writers of the plays, who were almost certainly the monks, began to introduce into the Bible story that was represented incidents and characters of their own invention.

Some of these incidents and characters were of a rather surprising kind—surprising, that is, to us. If you and I were to go to church one Sunday, and the clergyman, in the midst of reading to us the story of how Herod caused all the children of two years and under to be slain, were to give us a loud and rather comical account of how Herod raged and stormed and shouted when the Wise Men did not return to bring him news, we should be shocked and astounded. If, on Easter morning, when we were listening reverently to the beautiful story of the holy women coming to Christ's sepulchre, we should suddenly find that the clergyman had passed to a humorous account of how these women on their way went to a spice-merchant to buy the spices they needed, and how he tried to cheat them, and gave witty answers to their complaints, we should feel amazed, even if we could not help laughing. Yet such things happened in those early days, and the congregations were neither shocked nor displeased, only deeply interested. They were like children who had not learned to separate the sacred from the familiar. They did not mean to be irreverent. The priests saw nothing wrong in such representations. They were trying to teach the Gospel story in the way they thought would best make an ignorant people remember it. It was not until a good deal later, when these comic scenes had become much more frequent and much more boisterous, that the Church realized that they were harmful.

All these changes and additions caused the scenes that were acted in the church to become longer and longer, and at



length they became too long to be included as part of the service. Then a special time was appointed for them, and as a result they grew longer still. They were acted in the choir of the church, but soon this was found to be too small for the purpose. Then the plays were performed in the nave, and the people were crowded into the side aisles and the galleries. But still the audiences grew, and more space was required; so the plays were taken into the churchyard. Here there was space for a large audience, some standing round, some crowding the windows, the doorways, the walls, and every place from which a view could be obtained. It happened in some cases that the churchyard was small or not conveniently situated; then the plays were taken to an open space near by, often to the market-place; and this was important, because it meant that the plays were, in some sense, disconnected from the Church.

All this time the number of players needed for the different plays had been increasing, and soon it became impossible for all the parts to be taken by the priests and monks. Certain men and youths from the congregation had to be called in; and as these new actors knew but very little Latin the plays, or at any rate parts of them, had to be given in the tongue of the people. It is probable that this did not happen until some years after the Conquest, when the tongue of the people would be Norman-French. We are not sure exactly when any of the changes that have been noted took place. We can only trace the development of the plays by references to them in the records of the time, and by the few manuscripts of plays or portions of plays that have come down to us.

One of the most interesting of these manuscripts is of a play called *Adam*. It is rather a long play—about six hundred lines—and is written mostly in Norman-French, with a few passages in Latin. Scholars believe that it was written and acted in England toward the end of the twelfth century. The characters in it are Adam and Eve, the Figura (God), and Diabolus (Satan). The stage directions are very full, and give us a very clear idea of those performances to which our



forefathers crowded so eagerly, and which they enjoyed so much.

“A Paradise is to be made,” they begin,

in a raised spot, with curtains and cloths of silk hung round it at such a height that persons in the Paradise may be visible from the shoulders upwards. Fragrant flowers and leaves are to be set round about, and divers trees put therein with hanging fruit, so as to give the likeness of a most delicate spot. Then must come the Saviour clothed in a dalmatic, and Adam and Eve to be brought before him.

God gives His commands to Adam and Eve, and then leaves them to the enjoyment of the garden.

The stage directions go on:

Then the Figura must depart to the church, and Adam and Eve walk about Paradise in honest delight. Meanwhile, the demons are to run about the stage with suitable gestures, approaching the Paradise from time to time, and pointing out the forbidden fruit to Eve, as though persuading her to eat it. Then the Devil is to come and address Adam.

After the scene in which Adam and Eve eat the fruit it is directed that

when the Figura comes again Adam and Eve hide in a corner of Paradise, and when called upon stand up, not altogether erect, but for shame of their sin somewhat bowed and very sad. They are driven out, and an angel with a radiant sword is put at the gate of Paradise. The Figura returns to the church.

Then Adam shall have a spade and Eve a hoe, and they shall begin to till the soil and sow corn therein. And when they have sown they shall go and sit down awhile, as if wearied with toil, and anon look tearfully at Paradise, beating their breasts. Meanwhile shall come the Devil, and shall plant thorns and thistles in their tillage, and avoid.<sup>1</sup> And when Adam and Eve come to their tillage, and see the thorns and thistles sprung up, they shall be smitten with violent grief, and shall throw themselves on the earth and sit there, beating their breasts and thighs, and betraying grief by their gestures. And Adam shall begin a lament.

Then shall come the Devil and three or four devils with him, carrying in their hands chains and iron fetters which they shall put on the necks of Adam and Eve. And some shall push and others pull them to hell; and hard by hell shall be other devils, ready to

---

<sup>1</sup> go out.

meet them, who shall hold revel at their fall. And certain other devils shall point them out as they come, and shall snatch them up and carry them into hell; and there shall they make a great smoke arise and call aloud to each other with glee, and clash their pots and kettles that they may be heard without. And after a little delay the devils shall come out and run about the stage; but some shall remain in hell.

It all seems to us grotesque and rather childish, but to our forefathers it was deeply interesting, even awe-inspiring. And whatever else we think of it, we can see that here was a real play, with action and dialogue, and dealing with the same passions and emotions that men and women feel to-day. It is clear that the play was produced under the direction of the Church; the actor who represented God must have been a priest, since he wore a dalmatic, which was a sacred vestment, used during the solemn service of the Mass. It was probably acted in the churchyard, for the *Figura* goes back into the church after each of His appearances. But as the years went on, and the plays grew longer and more elaborate, it became more and more difficult for the Church to keep her control over them. By the end of the fourteenth century they had passed into the hands of the trade guilds, which, as we shall see, carried them on to a great development.



---

## Chapter VIII

### "LONG WILL," THE POET OF THE POOR

**I**N the early years of the reign of Edward III the boy who was to be the poor folks' poet lived with his parents in a village near the beautiful Malvern Hills. He grew up into a tall, gaunt, yellow-haired youth, who loved to wander by himself through the fair West Country, thinking his own thoughts, and puzzling over many things that seemed to him strange, and not according to what the monks at the Benedictine monastery where he went to school had taught him was the will of God. The neighbours called him a dreamer, and a dreamer he was; but his clear eyes saw many things besides visions, and his tender heart was wounded every day by the misery of the people among whom he lived.

For this was a terrible time for the peasants of England. Will Langland's father was poor, and the boy knew what it was to be hungry and cold day after day. Yet he did not care so much for his own sufferings as for the sufferings of the people round about him:

Burdened with children and chief lords' rent,  
What they spare from their spinning they spend it in  
house hire;  
Both in milk and in meal to make a mess o' porridge,  
To satisfy therewith the children that cry out for food.  
Also themselves suffer much hunger  
And woe in winter time with waking of nights  
To rise 'twixt the bed and the wall and rock the cradle,  
Both to card and to comb, to patch and to wash,  
To tub and to reel, rushes to peel;  
That pity 'tis to read or show in rhyme  
The woe of these women that dwell in cots.

Men said that the new woollen industry brought from Flanders was making England rich, and, for the towns, this might be true. But in the country where Will lived it meant



that the landowners had turned their cornfields into pasture-lands and were rearing sheep instead of growing grain, so that fewer men were needed, and many were thrown out of work. There was great talk of the victories in France, and of the glory England had won. Will had heard of the terrible sea-fight at Sluys that had been fought when he was nine years old and of the battle of Crécy, six years later, where Edward, the boy-prince, had won his spurs. But all that came from these victories, as far as the country-folk were concerned, was heavier taxes and deeper poverty. And it seemed to Will that kings and princes would be better employed in looking after their people than in waging war only for glory. Then there was the Church. Will was very loyal to his religion—he thought perhaps he might be a priest himself some day—but he could not help seeing that many of the monks were idle and self-indulgent, and that the monasteries were no longer the homes of piety and learning, as they had been, so he had heard, in the days gone by. The poor people no longer went to the monks in their troubles. There was no one now to help the poor, the boy thought passionately. He had seen monks selling pardons in the market-place and cozening the utmost penny out of the ignorant peasants. The monks in early times had been the workers and the alms-givers; now many of them lived in idleness by despoiling the poor.

Will Langland, "Long Will," as he was called, brooded over all these things, and grew sadder and more silent as the years passed. He went on with his preparation for the priesthood, and we think that he took minor orders.<sup>1</sup> He lived through the terrible Black Death of 1349, and saw how it made the hard lot of the peasants harder still. He longed to do something to help them, but he was poor and powerless; and besides he was still a dreamer, not a man of action. "All the sciences under the sun and all the subtil crafts I would I knew, and understood well in my heart," he said; but he went on to

<sup>1</sup> Priests in minor orders were permitted to marry; if they did so they could not be raised to the higher ranks of the clergy.



confess that though he was "eager to learn" he was "loth to study." All he could do was to try to make other people feel what he felt so strongly, to plead for truth and righteousness, for fair dealing between man and man.

He set himself to do this in the only way he could—by putting it all into a poem. We do not know when he began this poem, but we think about 1362. Most likely it had been running in his head for years before he put it down on paper. In 1362 he had been for some time in London, and was living in a small house on Cornhill. He had married, and so had lost all chance of rising high in the Church. He earned a scanty living by saying Masses for the souls of the dead, by copying manuscripts and writing out legal documents. He was poor—so poor that he and his wife and his little daughter did not always have enough to eat.

Yet, as in his boyhood, his own troubles weighed on him less heavily than did the troubles of other people; and he had found that there was more poverty and misery and crime in this rich city of London than there was among the peasants in his native Malvern Hills. Every day as he walked the streets of the city he met splendidly dressed lords and ladies, with their horses and servants, and the other passers-by stared at this tall, black-robed, shabby clerk who would not doff his hat or show any sign of respect to these great people. The reason was that he believed they led idle and useless lives, and oppressed the poor. He heard, too, tales of the bribery that went on among the lawyers and the King's servants; and he saw how greedy the Church was, and how she neglected the needy and ignorant people who were her charge. The poor people themselves were drunken and idle, and worked only when the master's eye was on them. It seemed to Long Will that men cared for nothing but money, that God was forgotten, and gold put in His place.

In this mood he worked at his poem, *The Vision of Piers Plowman*. It told how the poet, wandering one day among the Malvern Hills, grew weary and lay down to sleep; and as



he slept he had a vision. He saw in the valley beneath him "a faire feld full of folke." On a hill in the midst stood a tower, and, beneath, a deep dale with a dungeon, "dredful of sight." There were all sorts of people in the field—beggars winning alms by false pretences, and afterward fighting over their gains in the ale-house; pilgrims and palmers with their lying tales; hermits, "great lubbers and long, who loth were to labour," who professed religion in order to gain an easy living; friars preaching a false gospel to win money from the people; a pardoner with a crowd of ignorant men round him; a bishop, who was "not worth his two ears," and would not interfere to stop all this corruption. Then came a hundred lawyers, who would defend any cause however unrighteous if they were well paid, but "you could more easily measure the mist on Malvern Hills than get a 'mum' out of their mouths unless money were showed." There were barons and bondmen, brewers and butchers, weavers and tailors, tinkers and masons; there were hard-working ploughmen and labourers and some honest merchants; there were cooks who cried, "Hot pies!" and "Good geese and pigs!" and taverners selling white wine and red. All the world as Long Will had seen it was gathered into that fair valley beneath the Malvern Hills.

This is the Prologue. The first part tells how a lovely lady came down from the tower and spoke to the dreamer. She bade him look at these people, and see how they cared only for this world and had no thought to give to heaven or to God. The majesty of this lady awed the dreamer, and he asked her to explain to him what the vision meant. "That tower," she said, "is the tower of Truth, the dwelling-place of God the Father, who gave mankind all good gifts that they might use them moderately, without greediness or excess. The dungeon is the Castle of Care, where lives Wrong, the father of False, who deceives all who trust in worthless treasures."

Then the dreamer wondered at her wisdom, and asked her name, and she told him she was Holy Church. "Thou oughtest to know me, I received thee first and taught thee



faith, and thou didst promise to love me loyally while thy life should endure." The dreamer fell on his knees before her, and besought her to tell him how he might save his soul, and she bade him seek out Truth, who would teach him all things. "When all treasures are tried Truth is the best," she said. "Love thy Lord dearer than thyself, and do no deadly sin, die though thou shouldest. Be merciful as your Father is merciful; for unless you live truly, and love and help the poor, neither Mass nor prayers will be of any account."

"And how," he asked, "shall I tell the False from the True?"

"Look," said the lady, "there is the company of False." Then he looked, and saw a woman wonderfully clothed in rich embroidered garments, and on her head a crown finer than any king's. She had rings on all her five fingers, set with precious gems. She rode like a queen in her bright scarlet robe.

"That is Meed,"<sup>1</sup> said Holy Church, "the daughter of Falsehood; to-morrow she will wed with False; and all those around her are flatterers and liars." Then she warned him to have nothing to do with that false company, and so left him.

Part II tells how the dreamer saw the preparations for the marriage of Lady Meed. A great pavilion was pitched on a hill, and ten thousand tents set about it; and there assembled friars and lawyers, and knights and clerks, ready to take their part. Then the marriage deed was brought forward, which gave to Meed and to False all the rich dominions of the Seven Deadly Sins, in return for which they must, at the year's end, yield their souls to Satan. But Theology interfered to prevent the wedding between Meed and False, and all the company resolved to go to London to appeal to the King.

Part III and Part IV tell how Meed was brought before the King, and how Conscience, Reason, and Love spoke against her; and after this the dreamer awoke. But soon he fell asleep again, and dreamed as before; and now the real hero of the poem, Piers the Plowman, appeared.

<sup>1</sup> worldly gain.



The dreamer saw once more the "faire feld full of folke," and Conscience, holding a cross, preaching to them. The pestilence, he told them, had been sent because of their sins, and so had the great tempest that had lately done so much damage. He bade the wasters go to work, the vain women give up their vanity, all men to care for their wives, the priests to practise what they preached, the King to love the commons, the Pope to have pity on the Church, the pilgrims and palmers to leave other saints and seek the shrine of St Truth.

Then came Repentance, and moved many to sorrow for their sins; there was weeping and loud confession, and all the Seven Deadly Sins vowed penitence. Soon a thousand men pressed forward, crying on Christ and His Mother to help them on their way to seek St Truth. But none knew where St Truth was to be found, and they wandered aimlessly about, until at length they came upon a ploughman, who vowed he had known Truth this fifteen years, "as well as a clerk doth his book." Then those who were seeking Truth offered him money if he would guide them, but he declared that he would not take a penny. "Truth would love me the less for a long time after." Truth, he told them, dwelt in a tower above the sun, and even Death might not disobey him. The ploughman would go with them, he said, but first he must finish ploughing the half acre he had begun. He set to work, and the pilgrims helped him, except some idlers and shirkers who passed the time singing and drinking ale. Piers threatened them that if they would not work they should not eat; and some pretended they were blind or lame, and begged alms. Then Hunger came, and seized them, and buffeted them so sorely that they cried for mercy, and begged to be given work. Piers asked Hunger what must be done if this sort of thing occurred again. "Those who are whole and strong," said Hunger, "if they will not work must be given horse bread and dog bread and bones, but the sick and needy must be fed and comforted." So Piers thanked Hunger, and prayed him go home to his own



place; but Hunger declared that he would not go until he had dined, and drunk well also. "I have no penny," quoth Piers,

"pullets for to buy,  
Neither geese nor pork, but two green cheeses,  
Some curds and some cream and an oaten cake,  
Two bean loaves with bran, just baked for my children.  
And I say by my soul I have no salt bacon,  
Nor eggs, by my Christendom, collops to make;  
But I have parsley and leeks and many cabbages;  
Eke a cow and a calf, and an old cart-mare  
To draw afield dung, while the drought shall prevail.  
By such food must we live, until Lammas-time come;  
I hope I may have then some harvest afield;  
And I'll dight thee a dinner, as dearly will please me."  
Then all the poor people their pea-shells brought,  
Beans and baked apples they brought in their laps,  
Young onions and chervil, and ripe cherries many,  
And proffered these presents Sir Hunger to please.

So Hunger was fed and put to sleep; and Part VI ends with a warning to labourers not to be exacting and demand fine bread and fresh meats, and grumble at the King and his laws if they do not get what they want. Such doings will bring famine upon them for a punishment.

Part VII tells how, when they were just about to set out, St Truth, having heard of Piers, sent him a pardon, which is also for kings, knights, and bishops, and the labouring poor, and for such merchants and lawyers as deserve it. A priest expressed a doubt whether the pardon was true, and asked to see it. "By St Peter!" the priest said,

"no pardon I find  
Save 'Do-well and have-well, and God shall have thy soul,'  
And 'Do-ill and have-ill, and hope nothing else  
But after thy death-day, the devil have thy soul.'"

Then Piers grew angry, and the dispute between him and the priest was so loud that the dreamer awoke.

This is the end of the poem as it was first written; but afterward Langland, or, as some people think, other writers, altered and added to it, and about 1377 produced an entirely new version of it. By this time the poem was becoming known all over the country. Many copies of it were made, and passages



of it were learned, and repeated by one person to others, and so passed on and spread. Piers the Plowman became a hero among the peasants and labourers and poor craftsmen of the country. There was a great deal of discontent among these people, and a great deal of angry talk about the rights of the poor man and the wickedness of his oppressors. Excited groups gathered in the towns and the villages, and the more violent urged the others to try what hard blows would do. Some, like Wat Tyler and Jack Straw, went about doing their best to stir their fellows up to rebellion, and some of Wiclif's "Poor Priests" (of whom we shall hear in another chapter) helped the movement by the sermons they preached as they travelled from town to town and from village to village. John Ball, who was called "the Mad Priest of Kent," was one of the most violent. "Good people," he would cry,

"things will never go well in England so long as goods be not in common, and so long as there be serfs and gentlemen. By what right are they whom we call lords greater folk than we? If we all came of the same father and mother, of Adam and Eve, how can they say or prove that they are better than we?"

And then he would repeat the old rhyme:

"When Adam delved and Eve span,  
Who was then the gentleman?"

Langland's poem did not preach rebellion. He did not believe that any good could come from Englishmen fighting against Englishmen, and he rebuked the poor folk just as sternly for their laziness and drunkenness as he rebuked the rich for their selfishness and evil living. He tried to make them see that they had all one Father, and if they sought that Father by doing as the Holy Church in his vision had bade him do, all their miseries would be healed. But because he had made a ploughman his hero, and because he had shown such compassion for the poor, men classed him with these others who were stirring up strife and ill-will.

The rising which we know as Wat Tyler's Rebellion came in 1381, and failed; and after it the condition of the people



became worse than before. There were cruel punishments for the rebels, and even harsher laws, that seemed to take from the labouring man all hope of better things. Poor Langland must have been heartbroken. He had thought and dreamed all his life of a time when love and righteousness should prevail. He had worked for it, putting his whole soul into the poem which he hoped might show men the true way out of their troubles. And now it seemed that he had only helped to bring about disaster, and had made the lot of the poor brothers he loved more bitter than before. He saw as he walked the London streets the signs of this fresh misery, and grief pressed heavily upon him. He found some relief, we believe, in going over the poem which had been the work of his life, altering and rewriting, and produced a new version in 1390.

Before this time he seems to have left London. We do not know where he went or how he lived, but there is an old tradition, which we should like to believe, that he came back to the priory among the Malvern Hills, and spent his old age where he had spent his boyhood, among the scenes he loved so well.

---

## *Chapter IX*

### GEOFFREY CHAUCER, THE GREAT TELLER OF TALES

**A**T the time when Will Langland was still a dreamy youth, wandering among the Malvern Hills, there lived on the Thames' side a well-to-do London vintner whose name was John Chaucer. His house was not a mansion such as some of the thriving merchants of that day were beginning to build for themselves. It was an ordinary citizen's house, where the master carried on his business and where he and his family, his apprentices and serving-men, lived together in the sober dignity befitting the household of a man well thought of in the city of London. For the vintner had a large and profitable business. He had dealings with the Court and the royal family, and especially with Lionel, Duke of Clarence; and on one occasion he attended King Edward III and Queen Philippa on their journey up the Rhine, made for the purpose of forming an alliance with the Emperor Louis IV.

John Chaucer had one son, Geoffrey, a bright-eyed, merry little boy, not noisy or boisterous, but very quick to notice all that was happening around him. He lived in the midst of the stir and bustle that was for ever going on by the Thames' side. He saw strange ships making their way up the great river, and foreign-looking sailors, with rings in their ears, unloading cargoes or loafing on the quay. He saw stately merchants from the Hanse towns over the water making their way to their great hall—the Steel Yard, as it was called—where they held grave business meetings with their English brethren, his own father among them. Indoors, where his mother, Dame Agnes Chaucer, ordered her household in sober plenty, there were the apprentices and the servants and the many guests, some of them men of high rank and importance, for the little



boy to watch in his own quiet fashion. The world as it showed itself to him in those early days was full and busy and abounding in interest.

By and by Geoffrey Chaucer went to school, most likely to St Paul's, which was the one nearest his home, and then there were his schoolfellows to watch, and the monks who were his teachers, and the clergy of the church to which he went regularly on holy days. There were the streets through which he passed on his way to and from school; and the streets in Chaucer's day were more interesting than they are in our own, for much of the business was done in the open air. On the great festival days, when there were royal processions or public shows, the narrowest and dirtiest streets glowed with colour; rich bright stuffs hung from the windows, shining banners waved from the roofs, and all the people came out in their gayest holiday dress. Then there were the May Day revels on Cornhill, and the great bonfires in the streets on Midsummer Eve, and the dancing and merry-making on other festivals of the Church.

All this in the season of fine weather; when the rain came the ill-kept streets were dismal enough. Geoffrey Chaucer, like the other schoolboys of his time, knew what it was to trudge home from school through deep mire, stumbling and slipping in unlighted ways, liable at any moment to be pushed by some stronger wayfarer into the gutter, where a deep and filthy stream swirled down the street. He knew what it was to reach home chilled through and through, and to sit all the evening, shivering and coughing, in a room where keen blasts rushed through the ill-made walls toward the fire in the middle, whose smoke had no other way of escape than a hole in the roof.

Worse things than mud and gloom Geoffrey Chaucer often saw in the streets of London. Those were the days when the law was slow and unready, especially in the cause of the poor man, and so the citizens often took the punishment of offenders into their own hands. There were frequent brawls in the



streets; and sometimes there would be a hue and cry raised, and a savage crowd would join in the chase of some poor wretch fleeing for his life. Geoffrey Chaucer must have seen, either in his boyhood or later, more than one such man when he had been caught by the crowd, and dragged, white-faced and trembling, to suffer the rough justice of a mob that knew nothing of mercy, for he has described the scene in one of his poems as no one who had not actually seen it could have described it.

Have ye not seen some time a pallid face  
Among a press, of him that hath been led  
Towards his death, where him awaits no grace?  
And such a colour in his face hath had,  
Men mightë know his face was so bested  
'Mong all the other faces in that rout!

When Geoffrey Chaucer was about fifteen years old he became page to the Duchess of Clarence, wife of Lionel, the tallest and handsomest of all the King's sons. The household was a gay and splendid one, and the page in his red and black hose and short cloak moved wide-eyed among the crowds of lords and ladies, and learned to know something of the life of a Court. He went with his royal mistress to feasts and pageants, he heard daily tales of knightly exploits in war and in the tournament. Part of a page's duty was to read aloud to his mistress and her ladies the romances which had by this time been banished from the great hall, but were still the favourite literature of the lady's bower. Geoffrey Chaucer grew to know these lifeless stories well, and very likely made great fun of them afterward with his fellow-pages—as he made great fun of them later in his *Canterbury Tales*. Perhaps as he read he thought that it was time England had a new set of stories, that these romances were worthless and outworn; but he did not know that he was to be the man to give her what she wanted, and to become her great story-teller for all time.

He must have made a good page, for he stayed in the service of the Duchess for more than two years, and then he went, most likely in Prince Lionel's train, to fight in the war against



France. He was at the battle of Reims, was taken prisoner, and released by the Treaty of Bretigny, the King himself paying sixteen pounds toward his ransom; and all the time his shrewd, humorous eyes were watching the life around him, at sea and in camp, on the road and in prison, and he was learning to know the sailors and soldiers, and all the followers of an army, almost as well as he had learned to know the members of the Prince's household.

After 1360 we hear no more of Geoffrey Chaucer until 1367, when we find him in the King's service as Yeoman of the Chamber. Long before this he had begun to write poetry, and if we are to take what he says in these early poems as true, he had been suffering deeply for the love of a lady who did not love him. But perhaps it was only imaginary woe and an imaginary lady; or perhaps the "Philippa" whom he married, we believe, about this time was herself the maiden of his love, who had relented and given him her heart.

Between 1370 and 1380 Chaucer was sent abroad seven times as the King's ambassador. He went to various European countries, and in Italy he stayed for nearly a year. It is believed that he visited Petrarch, the famous Italian poet, who was then living in a little village near Padua. In *The Canterbury Tales* Chaucer makes one of his pilgrims say:

"I wol yow telle a talë, which that I  
Lerned at Padowë<sup>1</sup> of a worthy clerk,  
As preved<sup>2</sup> by his wordës and his werk.  
He is now deed,<sup>3</sup> and naylëd in his chest,<sup>4</sup>  
I pray to God so yeve<sup>5</sup> his soulë rest!  
Fraunces Petrak, the lauriat poëte,  
Hightë<sup>6</sup> this clerk, whose rethorikë sweet  
Illumynd al Ytaille of poetrie."

These are Chaucer's own words, just as he wrote them more than five hundred years ago. At first his spelling seems very quaint, and his English hard to understand. But you will soon

<sup>1</sup> Padua.  
<sup>4</sup> coffin.

<sup>2</sup> proved.  
<sup>5</sup> give.

<sup>3</sup> dead.  
<sup>6</sup> was called.



find it interesting to puzzle out his meaning, and not really difficult if you remember that many of his words end in 'e' which would have no 'e' now, and that in many of them this final 'e' forms an extra syllable.

The "talë" is the beautiful story of Griselda, of which Petrarch had written a Latin version, and it seems likely that Chaucer is speaking here of an actual meeting that he had with the Italian poet.

In 1374 the Corporation of London granted to Chaucer a lease for his life of "the whole of the dwelling-house above the gate of Aldgate, with the rooms built over, and a certain cellar beneath the same gate." At the same time he was given an appointment at Court and a pension, so that he had no anxiety about money and could work quietly at his poems in the months he spent at home between one of his foreign missions and the next. In 1382 he was given another appointment, that of Comptroller of the Petty Customs in the Port of London. His travelling days were over, and he settled into the quiet, orderly life of a man of business. Every morning he went out, walking to the Custom House in Spurrier Lane, and every evening about five o'clock he came back to his pleasant lodging above Aldgate, with the busy city lying on one side of it and the green leafy country stretching away on the other. There he was, after so many varied and eventful years, a plump, contented, middle-aged Geoffrey Chaucer, looking down with kindly, humorous understanding upon the great city that was his birthplace, and had been his home for the greater part of his life. He still felt the keenest interest in his fellow-creatures. He was still full of the joy of living. He loved fresh May mornings, and fields and flowers, especially the daisy:

. . . of all the flouris in the mede  
Thanne love I most these flouris white and rede  
Swyche as men callen dayesyis in oure toun.

He loved the stir of the city streets, and the busy quays, and the ships coming up the river. He loved good things to eat and



drink ; and he loved books. In his *House of Fame* he makes the talking eagle say to him:

“ . . . when thy labour doon al is,  
And hast y-maad thy rekenynges,  
In stede of reste and newē thynges,  
Thou gost hoom to thy hous anoon,  
And, also domb as any stoon,  
Thou sittest at another boke,  
Til fully daswēd<sup>1</sup> is thy looke,  
And lyvest thus as an herēmyte,  
Although thyn abstynence is lyte.”<sup>2</sup>

Not far away, in his poor home on Cornhill, Will Langland was living hardly, and toiling for small reward, while in his scanty leisure he built up his great poem. Chaucer was working hard too, though under so much happier conditions. He wrote several of his poems at this time, but I am not going to tell you anything about them, except the greatest of them all, which is the last. The others you will read for yourselves when you are older.

Before this last and greatest poem was begun Chaucer's pleasant way of life had been broken up by misfortunes that came upon him one after another. King Edward III had died in 1377, and the young King Richard was in the guardianship of his uncles. Of these John of Gaunt had always been Chaucer's friend and patron; but now John of Gaunt was abroad, and the Duke of Gloucester was at the head of affairs. He looked on Chaucer as a supporter of the party that was opposed to his own, and he dismissed him from both his posts. Soon Chaucer began to be in pressing need of money. He raised some small sums on the pensions that had been granted to him, but these pensions also were taken away two years later. In 1387 his wife died. Yet in this, the darkest hour of his life, he did not lose courage or energy. In the midst of poverty and distress he began his wonderful *Canterbury Tales*.

In 1389 John of Gaunt's party came back to power, and Chaucer was appointed Clerk of the King's Works at Westminster. Other small appointments and a pension followed,

<sup>1</sup> dazed.

<sup>2</sup> little.



but he never seems to have been again in really comfortable circumstances. Perhaps in the grim years from 1386 to 1389 he had become so deep in debt that he was not able to clear himself.

All the years that had gone before had been a preparation for this. Those years had taken him into many different parts of the world. They had shown him many different classes of his fellow-men, living many different kinds of lives. They had helped him to understand their difficulties and not to bear too hardly on their faults. They had, in fact, supplied his genius with just the material it wanted. Geoffrey Chaucer, now that he was nearly fifty years old, was ready to give his age what it had been waiting for—a new set of stories about real men and women, told as only a true poet could tell them.

He chose a subject that was familiar to everybody—a party of pilgrims journeying to the shrine of St Thomas à Becket at Canterbury. There were few people in England, except the very poor, who had not at one time or another taken part in such a pilgrimage. Some went out of pure religious zeal and devotion, some because their priest had ordered it. Some who were travelling on their own business joined the company of pilgrims because it was not safe in those days for a man to journey alone. Many looked upon it simply as a pleasant and exciting excursion, and went on a pilgrimage as we should go on a summer holiday.

So Chaucer told his story about a party of pilgrims who, in the dusk of a lovely evening in spring, rode in ones and twos and threes across London Bridge to the Tabard Inn, that stood on the southern side of the river. This was their appointed meeting-place, from which they would start next morning for Canterbury. First came a Knight just home from the wars, brave as a lion and meek as a maid. He rode in sober dignity on his good horse, wearing a fustian tunic stained with rust-marks from his coat of mail. Beside him pranced his gaily apparelled son, a handsome, curly haired lad of twenty, “as fresshe as is the month of May.” All day long he was singing



and fluting and making songs in praise of his lady-love; but he could fight too, and had shown already that in time he might make as good a knight as his father. A sturdy Yeoman, "clad in cote and hood of grene" and carrying a great bow and sheaf of arrows, attended them.

There followed a stately little procession—a Prioress sitting very upright on her horse, with a nun and three priests in attendance. She was a fine lady, although she was a Prioress. Her well-made cloak and wimple set off her fine figure and fair face, and her manners were very gracious and elegant. The fat, jovial Monk who rode in after her had none of her dignity, though he too was as finely dressed as his order allowed, with fur on his sleeves and a gold brooch to fasten his hood. It was easy to see that he did not keep very strictly the rule of that order, and that he loved pleasure better than study and feasting better than good works. The sturdy, loud-voiced Friar who rode noisily up behind him was as fat and as fine as he was. Chaucer does not speak of these unworthy ecclesiastics with the stern indignation of Will Langland. He sees their faults clearly enough, but he makes quiet fun of them, and in doing so he gives his readers a far clearer picture of the corruption of the Church than he could have done by denouncing them.

After the Friar came a sober, substantial Merchant—one such as the boy Geoffrey Chaucer had often seen in his father's home by the Thames' side. And then, shambling after the sleek steeds of these rich and prosperous people, came a horse "leenë as is a rake," with a thin, hollow-cheeked young scholar from Oxford on his back. This young man loved learning, and spent all his money on books, so that the clothes he wore were threadbare and his purse nearly empty, but for this he cared little so that he might read and learn.

Of studie took he moost cure<sup>1</sup> and moost hede,  
Noght o<sup>2</sup> word spak he moorë than was neede.

Next, riding up together, came a Sergeant of the Lawe, very

<sup>1</sup> care.

<sup>2</sup> one.



grave and important, and a Franklin, or, as we should call him, a country squire. This Franklin had a red face, and a beard as white as a daisy, and he was noted through all the countryside where he lived for the good cheer to be found at his house.

Withoutē bakē mete was never his hous,  
Of fissh and flessh, and that so plenteuous  
It snēwēd<sup>1</sup> in his hous of mete and drynke.

There followed a mixed company, a Haberdasher, a Carpenter, a Weaver, a Dyer, and a Tapestry-weaver, each in the special dress worn by the members of his trade guild. Then came a Cook, very skilful in his art, and a brawny, sunburnt Shipman, with a dagger hanging round his neck. There followed a famous "Doctour of Phisik" in his silk-lined gown of red and blue; and then, gently trotting upon a stout horse, came the "Good Wif of Bath." Very different from the elegant, well-bred Prioress was this big, handsome woman, with her loud voice and her jolly laugh. She had had five husbands in her day, and was now a rich widow with a thriving clothmaking business, so she had plenty of money to spend on the fine clothes that she loved. She wore, according to the fashion of merchants' wives, fine handkerchiefs covering her head and fastening under her chin. Above them was a great hat "as brood as is a bokeler or a targe." Her hose were of "fyn scarlet reed," and she wore spurs on her shining new shoes; she was wrapped in a wide mantle that fell almost to her feet.

She rode into the inn-yard shouting out jovial greetings to the host and the other pilgrims; and they shouted back to her, for she was a little deaf. Amid the bustle and laughter the two quiet figures that followed her were scarcely noticed. The first was a "Poure Persoun of a Toun," who was as thin and as shabby as the Clerk of Oxenford; but although he too loved learning the Poor Parson did not spend his money on books—he spent it in helping the people of his parish. If anyone doubts that Chaucer, for all his jesting and his kindly

<sup>1</sup> snowed.



tolerance, loved true goodness as fervently as did Langland, or Wiclif, or any of the reformers of the age, that person should read the description of the Poor Parson. Read it for yourselves as soon as you have a chance—it is one of the most beautiful passages in all Chaucer's works. Here are a few lines taken from it:

Wyð was his parisshe, and houses fer asonder,  
But he ne lafte<sup>1</sup> nat for reyn ne thonder,  
In siknesse nor in meschief to visite  
The ferreste in his parisshe, mucche and lite,<sup>2</sup>  
Upon his feet, and in his hand a staf.  
This noble ensample to his sheepe he yaf<sup>3</sup>  
That firste he wroghte and afterward he taughte.

His brother, who was a Ploughman—a hard-working man, and as simple and pious as the Parson himself—rode with him.

After the Ploughman came a big, thickset, red-bearded Miller; a thin, long-legged, clean-shaven Reeve, or Sheriff; a Maunciple or Purveyor, whose business it was to buy and sell provisions on a large scale; a Somonour, or officer of the Church courts, with a garland of flowers on his head and a large cake in his hand; and a Pardoner. If we set Chaucer's description of this Pardoner by the side of his description of the Poor Parson, we shall see the two extreme types among those who in that age called themselves servants of Christ and of the Church. Here was a man whose whole end and aim was to get money. He brought pardons for sins of every kind from the Pope, and he tried to get the highest possible price for them, praising his wares loudly, and bargaining for payment in the same way that the quack doctor did with his pills and his ointments. Chaucer's Pardoner was especially well fitted for his work. He was a jovial man, with a free, pleasant manner and a persuasive tongue that could beguile the most stubborn among the ignorant people who were the customers he sought. He had long, smooth yellow hair hanging to his shoulders, bright, staring eyes, and a loud,

<sup>1</sup> desisted.

<sup>2</sup> great and small.

<sup>3</sup> gave.



tuneful voice. He carried a wallet full of pardons, "comen from Rome al hoot," and a trunk full of objects which he declared were relics of the saints; and sometimes by his wiles he would induce a poor country parson to give him a month's wages or more for what was really nothing but the bone of a pig.

Last of all the pilgrims there came, riding quietly in, a small, plump man, with humorous eyes demurely bent upon the ground—Chaucer himself.

Harry Bailly, the Host of the Tabard Inn, welcomed each pilgrim as he arrived in his own hearty fashion, and after the whole company had sat down together to a plentiful supper he made a proposal to them. He himself would go with them the next morning on their pilgrimage to Canterbury, and each member of the party should tell four stories, two as they went and two as they came back, to help the time to pass pleasantly; and on their return to the inn the teller of the best story should be entertained to a supper at the expense of the others. To this the rest of the party gladly agreed, and they begged the host to take the matter under his direction, to judge the stories, and arrange for the supper; this he consented to do. So they all went to bed in a very friendly mood, looking forward to a very pleasant journey.

This is the end of the *Prologue*. When you are a little older you must read it for yourselves, for no summary can give you more than just a bare idea of the fun and the kindliness, the insight and the zest, that Chaucer puts into his description of the pilgrims. Many people think the *Prologue* is the best part of *The Canterbury Tales*. There are twenty-five stories—for Chaucer carried out only a small part of his original plan, which would have given us a hundred and sixteen—and all of these are told on the journey toward Canterbury. We have no account of the journey back to the Tabard.

I am going to tell you one of these stories, that told by the Priest who was in attendance on the Prioress. I have chosen this, which is known as *The Nun's Priest's Tale*, not



because it is the best, but because it is shorter than most of the others, and because its subject is likely to amuse you. It is about a cock, a hen, and a fox, after the fashion of the fables that were very popular in France at this time. But Chaucer's story is much better than even the best French fables. His animals have as much character as human beings, and their adventures are told with such liveliness and spirit that the reader has no sense of unreality in the story.

### THE NUN'S PRIEST'S TALE

Once upon a time there was a poor widow who lived in a tiny cottage standing in a dale. She and her two daughters lived on the very plainest food—milk and brown bread, with sometimes a piece of bacon or an egg or two—and often they could not get enough even of that. There was no danger that they would make themselves ill by over-eating. The widow had three large sows, three cows, a sheep whose name was Malle, a cock, and seven hens. The cock and the hens lived in a yard which had a fence round it and a dry ditch outside, and here the cock, whose name was Chauntecleer, strutted up and down, showing off his beauties in the sun.

His coomb was redder than the fyn coral,  
And batailled as it were a castel wal;  
His byle<sup>1</sup> was blak, and as the jeet it shoon;  
Lyk asure were his leggës, and his toon;<sup>2</sup>  
His naylës whiter than the lylle flour,  
And lyk the burnëd gold was his colour.

No cock in the land could crow as well as he could; "his voys was merier than the merie orgon"; and he told the time of day as well as any clock. The seven hens who were his wives were almost as fair to look upon as he was, especially Pertelote, the one he loved the best.

One morning very early Chauntecleer began to groan loudly in his sleep, so that Pertelote, who was sitting on the perch beside him, was frightened, and begged him to tell

<sup>1</sup> bill.

<sup>2</sup> toes.



her what was the matter. "I have had a terrible dream," he answered, "so terrible that still I shake with fright. I dreamt that as I walked about our yard I saw a beast, ready to spring upon me and kill me. He was something like a dog, his colour between yellow and red, and his tail and his ears were tipped with black. He had a pointed snout, and such dreadful, glowing eyes that even now when I think of them I feel that I shall die."

"Fie upon you!" said she. "Now have you lost my love, for how could I love a coward? Women desire their husbands to be strong and wise, not frightened at every sign of danger."

"How dorste ye seyn, for shame, unto youre love  
That any thyng myghte makē yow aferd?  
Have ye no mannēs herte, and han<sup>1</sup> a berd?"

"Dreams," she went on, "are nothing to be afraid of. They come from eating too much, or some ill condition of the body. I pray you, take some medicine that will cure you of this weakness. There are herbs I know of that grow in our yard which are very good for cases such as yours. Eat of them freely, and keep out of the hot sun, and in a few days you will be well; and fear no dreams, my husband, I beseech you."

"I thank you, madam," replied Chauntecleer, "you are very wise; but there have been many learned men who have written about dreams, and have told us that dreams are often sent to warn us of some danger that threatens us." And then he went on—so learned a bird was he—to quote all sorts of ancient authors who had told of dreams sent as warnings, and of how those who had heeded them had escaped the threatened evil, and those who had scoffed had come to a dreadful end. He quoted from the Bible also, and reminded Pertelote that Daniel and Joseph had believed that dreams had a serious meaning. He would take no medicines, he said,

"I hem<sup>2</sup> diffye, I love hem never a deel."

But he did not want to quarrel with his beloved Pertelote. To look at her, he said, took away all his fears.

<sup>1</sup> have.

<sup>2</sup> them.



“For whan I se the beautee of youre face,  
Ye been so scarlet reed aboute youre eyen,<sup>1</sup>  
It maketh al my dredē for to dyen.”<sup>2</sup>

With that he flew down from his perch, and his hens flew after him, for by this time the day had come and it was time for him to wake the neighbourhood with his voice. He had quite got over his terror, and was even more lively than usual. He walked about on his toes, not deigning to put his foot to the ground; he hunted for grains for his wives, and called them together with a loud cluck when he had found one.

The days went on until March was over and spring had come in. The sun shone down upon the widow's yard, and Chauntecleer and his wives delighted in its warmth. The cock was brimming over with the joy of living.

“Herkneth thise blisful briddēs<sup>3</sup> how they synge,  
And se the fresshē flourēs how they sprynge;  
Ful is myn herte of revel and solas!”

He lifted up his voice and crowed loud and clearly, more merrily than the mermaids in their home beneath the sea, while Pertelote and her sisters bathed themselves happily in the dust of the yard. But alas! in the midst of mirth comes sorrow, and there was danger lurking near to put an end to all their joy. A fox, sly and cruel, had for three years lived in a grove near by the widow's cottage, and that night he had broken through the hedge, and had hidden himself in a bed of vegetables in the yard. There he had lain all day, waiting for a chance to pounce upon one of the birds, and very careful not to show himself lest they should fly up on the perch, where he could not reach them.

Then Chauntecleer in the midst of his singing turned his proudly held head to watch a butterfly that had lighted on one of the plants in the bed of vegetables, and saw among the green leaves the same cruel, glowing eyes that he had seen in his dream. Terror seized him. He cried loudly, “Cok, cok!” and spread out his wings to fly to a safe refuge. But the wily fox stood up and began to speak in a wheedling voice.

<sup>1</sup> eyes.

<sup>2</sup> die.

<sup>3</sup> birds.



“Gentle sir,” he said, “why do you fly from me that am your friend? I will do you no harm. I came here only to hear you sing, for your voice is like that of an angel from heaven. Your father and your mother were my friends; often have they been my guests in my house, and often have I watched your father as he made his merry song. He would stand on his tiptoes and stretch out his neck and shut his eyes tight to make his voice more strong. No cock that I have ever heard or read of in history could make such music. Let me now, I pray, hear if you can sing as your father did.”

Chauntecleer forgot his dream, forgot his fears, forgot what he had heard of the fox’s cunning. He heard only the flattering voice, and thought only of winning more praise. He stood upon his toes and stretched out his neck and shut close both his eyes; and then he crowed, loud and long. Up jumped Russell the fox, and seized him by the throat, and fled with him toward the wood.

Oh, what a dreadful day was that for all in the widow’s dwelling! It was a Friday, the day on which so many misfortunes had happened, but for none of them had there been more lamentation made than was made now for the loss of Chauntecleer. Pertelote shrieked as loudly as ever did Roman wife for a murdered husband, and the other hens shrieked with her. The widow and her daughters heard the noise and rushed out; and they saw the fox with Chauntecleer in his mouth running toward the wood. Then they too shrieked, and cried:

“Ha! ha! the fox!” and after hym they ran,  
 And eek with stavēs many another man;  
 Ran Colle, oure dogge, and Talbot, and Gerland  
 And Malkyn, with a dystaf in hir hand;  
 Ran cow and calf, and eek the verray hogges,  
 So were they fered for berkyng of the dogges,  
 And shoutyng of the men and wommen eek;  
 They ronnē so hem thoughte hir hertē brek.  
 They yollēden,<sup>1</sup> as feendēs doon in helle;  
 The dokēs<sup>2</sup> cryden, as men wolde hem quelle;<sup>3</sup>  
 The gees, for feerē, flowen over the trees;

<sup>1</sup> yelled.

<sup>2</sup> ducks.

<sup>3</sup> kill.



Out of the hyvë cam the swarm of bees. . . .  
 Of bras they broghten bemës, and of box,  
 Of horn, of boon, in which they blewe and powped,  
 And therewithal they skriked and they howped;<sup>1</sup>  
 It semed as that hevene sholdë falle.

Chauntecleer heard all the commotion, and said to the fox:  
 "If I were you I would turn round and mock at these people.  
 I would say, 'Go back all of you, and may a pestilence fall  
 upon you. I have got the cock, and in spite of all that you can  
 do I will take him to the wood and eat him up.'" The idea  
 pleased the triumphant fox, and he opened his mouth to gibe  
 at his enemies; and out flew the cock and up into a high tree.

When the cunning fox saw that the cock had been more  
 cunning than he, he made one more effort to beguile him  
 with his tongue. "Oh, Chauntecleer," he said, "I am to  
 blame because I brought you here in a way that made you  
 afraid. But I did it in friendship and in love. Come down, and  
 I will tell you what I meant."

"Nay thanne," quod he, "I shrewe<sup>2</sup> us bothë two,  
 And first I shrewe myself, bothe blood and bones,  
 If thou bigyle me any ofter than ones.  
 Thou shalt na moorë, thurgh thy flaterye,  
 Do me to synge, and wynkë with myn eye,  
 For he that wynketh, whan he sholdë see,  
 Al wilfully, God lat him never thee!"  
 "Nay," quod the fox, "but God yeve hym meschaunce,  
 That is so undiscreet of governaunce  
 That jangleth whan he sholdë holde his pees."

Here the story ended, but the Nun's Priest added a moral:

Ye that holden this tale a folye—  
 As of a fox, or of a cok and hen—  
 Taketh the moralitëe, good men;  
 For Seint Paul seith that al that writen is,  
 To oure doctrine it is y-write y-wis;  
 Taketh the fruyt and lat the chaf be stille.  
 Now, goodë God, if that it be thy wille,  
 As seith my lord, so make us alle goode men,  
 And brynge us to his heighë blisse. Amen.

---

<sup>1</sup> shrieked and hopped.

<sup>2</sup> reproach.



---

## *Chapter X*

### TRAVELLERS' TALES

**T**HE typical Englishman of the Middle Ages was not a traveller. He stayed in the place where he was born, and knew little of the world outside. Even of his own country he had seldom seen more than the places he could reach on horseback in a journey of two or three days; we know how Chaucer's pilgrims took three days to ride from London to Canterbury. It is true that the roads of England during the summer season were crowded with wayfarers, on foot and on horseback; but these were chiefly nobles with their trains moving from one manor-house to another, poor students begging their way to a university, pilgrims, palmers, pedlars, friars, and beggars; and most of them were travelling no great distance. As to voyages overseas, the chief people who took such journeys were soldiers going to the French wars, messengers passing between one prince and another, merchants seeking trade, palmers and pilgrims visiting holy shrines abroad, and especially the sepulchre of Christ at Jerusalem, and nobles with their followers taking part in a Crusade. All these brought back travellers' tales to the people who stayed at home, and no story-tellers could have desired listeners more eager or more ready to believe what was told them. The strange lands overseas were for them mysterious and wonderful regions where anything might happen; and the more marvellous the story the more ready they were to accept it as true.

Peter the Hermit told a stirring traveller's tale to his countrymen when he preached to them of the persecutions that Christians had to endure when they came to the Holy Land to worship at the sepulchre of their Lord. His tale set the whole of Europe aflame and helped to send hundreds of men



over the seas to fight against the Moslems. It was perhaps a traveller's tale that suggested to Chaucer the story of "Cambuscan bold" that his young Squire told to the other pilgrims on the way to Canterbury; certainly if he had read, as he very likely did, the book written by Marco Polo, one of the greatest travellers of the age, it would have helped him in parts of his story. Marco Polo was an Italian youth who, in 1271, when he was seventeen years old, started out with his father and his uncle to travel in the eastern parts of Europe and in Asia. They reached China, where they stayed for seventeen years in the service of the Great Khan; then they came home by way of Persia, and reached Venice in 1295. At that time a war was going on between Venice and Genoa. Marco Polo at once took up arms, was captured, and spent three years in prison. During this time he dictated the story of his adventures to a fellow-prisoner, who wrote it down, probably in Latin, though of this we are not certain, for the original version has disappeared, and only later versions in Italian, French, and English now remain.

Marco Polo's book is on the whole a serious, careful account of the things he saw on his travels, and it gave to the people of Western Europe a clearer idea of the geography of the regions he described than they had ever had before. It told them all sorts of interesting details about the places and the people and the animals. There were large white oxen, it said, with smooth coats, short, thick horns, and a hump between their shoulders, who knelt down like camels to have their loads placed upon their backs; there were sheep as big as asses, with long, thick tails that weighed thirty pounds.

The book included also some stories of marvels and of magical occurrences which the people of those days were quite ready to believe.

The deserts in those regions, Marco Polo says, were inhabited by many evil spirits. If a traveller fell behind his companions he often heard his name called in the familiar voice of one of his friends; and if he followed this voice he was



led off the direct road and left to perish. At night travellers often heard the sound of an invisible marching cavalcade, first on one side of the road, then on the other. Sometimes spirits assumed the form of one of the company, and addressed a traveller by name, leading him astray; sometimes the air was filled with the sound of all sorts of musical instruments and the clash of arms.

The stories of Marco Polo travelled to England, and were received with delight, both for the information that could be gained from them and for the pleasure they gave.

But not all the travellers' tales were as profitable or as true as these. Many were wild exaggerations, or marvels made up to astonish the stay-at-homes. The stay-at-homes enjoyed them and were eager for more; and more were quickly forthcoming. By the middle of the fourteenth century a good many people had learned to read, and a company of copyists, besides those in the monasteries, were at work providing them with books. It occurred to certain writers of the time that if some of these travellers' tales were made into a book many people would wish to read them. John Trevisa, a Cornishman, translated in 1387 a work that had been written forty years before by Ranulf Higden, a monk of Chester. It was called *Polychronicon*, and was a history of the world from the beginning to the writer's own time. It contained descriptions of Persia, Babylon, and Rome, and gave all the legends that had been growing up during the Middle Ages concerning these places. Readers received it with delight, and other writers were encouraged to follow Trevisa's example; and chief among these was Sir John Mandeville.

*The Voiage and Travaile of Sir John Mandeville* appeared toward the end of the fourteenth century. The book is crammed with strange stories and with scraps of all sorts of curious learning. There are legends of saints, Scripture narratives, tales of dragons and enchanters, of fabulous beasts, and haunted, solitary places. Each place that Sir John visited had its marvel or its legend. At Jaffa, which is "one of the oldest towns in



the world, founded before Noah's flood," he saw marks in the rock "there as the iron chains were fastened that Andromeda, a great giant, was bounden with, and put in prison before Noah's flood, of the which giant is a rib of his side that is forty feet long." In Armenia he heard of a sparrow-hawk

upon a perch right fair and right well made, and a fair lady of faerie that keepeth it. And who that will watch that sparrow-hawk seven days and seven nights without company and without sleep, that fair lady shall give him, when he hath done, the first wish that he will wish of earthly things; and that hath been proved oftentimes.

In Ethiopia Sir John saw folk "that have but one foot, and they go so fast that it is a marvel, and the foot is so large that it shadoweth all the body against the sun when they will lie and rest them." He saw also men with no heads, whose eyes were in their shoulders; men whose faces were flat and featureless, with small round holes for their eyes and mouth; men with underlips so large that they could lie in the sun and draw them over their faces; men who had ears that hung down to their feet; men who had hoofs like horses. Marvelous trees too he found during his travels: trees that bore apples of Paradise, marked with a cross, and others that bore apples of Adam, which had a bite out of the side; trees whose fruit was "very short gourds which, when ripe, men open and find a little beast with flesh and blood and bone like a little lamb."

"Ye shall understand," the author said in his prologue, "that I have put this book out of Latin into French, and translated it again out of French into English that every man of my nation may understand it." The men of his nation, and the women too, and the boys and the girls, understood and delighted in it. Throughout the Middle Ages it was a favourite book with all who could read, and many copies of it were made; three hundred of these copies remain to this day.

For five centuries the book was read and praised as the most delightful of travellers' tales, and nobody doubted that it de-



scribed the journeys of that worthy knight Sir John Mandeville. But with the nineteenth century came suspicions. Scholars who had studied the literature of the Middle Ages—not only the great and famous books, but the less-known ones also—began to notice curious similarities between the adventures of Sir John Mandeville and the adventures recorded in books that had been written centuries before his time. A thorough investigation was undertaken, and it was proved that Sir John's *Voiage* was made up of scraps borrowed from books of all kinds and of all dates—classical books and medieval books, books of reference, history books, pilgrims' stories of their travels, fables, books of science. All these were so deftly arranged and blended that they made a complete story, showing no sign of being just a clever piece of patchwork. More remarkable still, the style is clear, easy, and simple, so that its author is often called the father of English prose.



---

## Chapter XI

### THE ROBIN HOOD BALLADS—THE POET KING

**W**E do not know exactly when the people of England began making ballads. The first one of which we have any record is that which tells of the deeds of King Canute, and which begins:

Merrily sang the monks of Ely,  
As King Canute rowed thereby.

Of this only a fragment is preserved, written in the chronicles of Ely monastery. There were ballads made, we know, about Hereward the Wake and Waltheof, telling of the deeds these two Saxon heroes did in the struggle against the Normans, but none of these have come down to us. Toward the end of the twelfth century another hero of the people appeared in the ballads of the time—Robin Hood the outlaw. Whether he was a real or an imaginary character we cannot tell; probably the ballads contain some truth and a good deal of fiction.

Robin Hood was born, so the story says, in the early years of the reign of Henry II, in the village of Locksley, near Sheffield; or, as some say, at a village of the same name in Nottinghamshire, close by that Forest of Sherwood to which he went after he became an outlaw. Some say that his true name was Robert Fitzooth, and that he was of noble blood, connected with the Earl of Huntingdon; but the earliest ballads call him simply a yeoman.

Lithe and lysten, gentylmen,  
That be of fre-bore blode:  
I shall you tell of a good yeman,  
His name was Robyn Hode.

Whether nobleman's son or yeoman's, the boy led the free, open-air life of a country lad, and grew up tall and strong and handsome. He learned, as all English boys did in those days,



## THE ROBIN HOOD BALLADS

---

to shoot with the bow, to wrestle, and to strike a good hard blow with the quarter-staff or cudgel. He was a brave, daring, generous-hearted lad, a leader among his fellows; and at all the shooting and wrestling matches young Robin carried off the prizes.

But skill in shooting with the bow was apt to bring punishment as well as rewards. The forest laws were very severe, and to shoot one of the King's deer was an offence that might be punished by death. Nevertheless, many of the King's deer were shot. To a young man roaming the forest with his bow and arrows at his side the sight of the wild creatures feeding in its glades was a temptation too strong to be resisted; and the fact that he was risking his life as he shot made the act seem like a brave adventure, not a common piece of thieving. Many slew their deer and bore it off undetected, and so were encouraged to go on. But often it happened that one of the royal keepers saw the deed, and then there was a great hue and cry after the offender; and so, the ballad says, it befell young Robin Hood. There was nothing for it, in such a case, but to give one's self up, and hope for the mercy which seldom came; or to evade one's pursuers, take to the woods, and become an outlaw. Most of the deer-stealers chose the second course, and henceforward lived with a price on their heads. Young Robin Hood chose it, and fled from his father's house to make his home in Sherwood Forest.

It was not such a terrible fate after all. Nobody thought any the worse of a man for being an outlaw, and many looked upon him as a hero. The life was not a hard one to those who, like Robin, had been brought up in the plain, sturdy fashion of English yeomen. In the summer it was as merry a life as need be:

When shawes <sup>1</sup> beene sheene <sup>2</sup> and shradds <sup>3</sup> full fayre,  
And leaves both large and longe,  
Itt is merry, walking in the fayre forest  
To heare the small birds songe,

says one of the Robin Hood ballads. In winter there were

<sup>1</sup> woods.

<sup>2</sup> bright.

<sup>3</sup> coppices.



many friends ready to give the outlaw a night's shelter from the weather; and there were hiding-places in the thick of the forest and woodmen's huts and lonely ruins in case of need. Sometimes the outlaw, usually in disguise, ventured into the town itself, and there was a great thrill to be obtained in lodging comfortably under the very noses of those whose business it was to hunt and capture and bring him to justice. Every day, indeed, brought its excitement and its adventure.

Robin had his full share, both of adventures and of hardships, and he enjoyed them all, and was the blithest, bravest, yet gentlest outlaw that ever bore a bow.

Robyn was a proude out-lawe,  
Whiles he walked on ground;  
So curteyse an outlawe as he was one,  
Was never none yfounde.

"He suffered no woman to be oppressed or otherwise molested," says Stow, the chronicler, "poor men's goods he spared, abundantlie relieving them with that which by theft he got from abbeyes and the houses of rich old carles." He was "of all thieves the prince, and the most gentle theefe."

As Robin had been a leader among the other lads in his boyhood, so he now soon became a leader among the outlaws. He formed a band of "a hundred tall men and good archers," and very soon these became famous all over the countryside, so that "four hundred (were they ever so strong) durst not give the onset" upon them. The most noted of these was Little John, whose real name was John Naylor. He was an enormous fellow, at least a head taller than tall Robin, and that was why his comrades, in mirth, called him Little John. There is a ballad which tells how he and Robin Hood met upon a log bridge that crossed a stream swollen by rains; how neither would give way to the other, and how they fought to see which was the better man; and how, after a long combat, during which Robin Hood got in some hard knocks, the big man smote him such a blow on the head with his cudgel that he toppled over into the water. But Robin bore no malice for



this, and was only too delighted when he found that his opponent had heard of him and his fellows, and was on his way to seek him out and beg that he might join the band. Henceforward Robin and Little John were the firmest of friends.

Others who belonged to the band were Will Scathlock, or Scarlet, who had been a friend of Robin's during his boyhood; Alan-a-dale, a young minstrel; Friar Tuck, jolly and fat, who, though he wore the robe of a monk, could fight as well as any of them with his stout cudgel; and Much, the miller's son, who had gained his name because he was so big and portly. They lived together in happy comradeship, and if one was in danger the others came to his help, even if it meant risking their own lives.

The most determined enemy these outlaws had was the Sheriff of Nottingham. He had made up his mind that he would hunt them down, and he was continually laying plans for their capture and sending parties into the forest to try to take them. This made great sport for Robin Hood and his men, and they took keen delight in outwitting the Sheriff and putting him into a passion. They would go boldly into Nottingham, sometimes in disguise, sometimes in their ordinary dress of Lincoln green, and there they would do all sorts of daring deeds under the very eyes of the Sheriff and his men. Sometimes one or two of them were caught, but even then the triumph of the Sheriff was not certain. Their comrades would dare anything to rescue them, and the people of the town were always on their side, for they hated the Sheriff, who was mean and tyrannical, and they loved open-handed, kindly, merry Robin. One of the ballads tells how the Sheriff took three of Robin Hood's men, the sons of a poor widow, and condemned them to death by hanging, and how Robin rescued them. It is one of the finest of the ballads. It begins:

There are twelve months in all the year,  
As I hear many men say,  
But the merriest month in all the year  
Is the merry month of May.



On a fine morning in this merry month of May Robin Hood set out for Nottingham, and on the way he met the poor widow, who told him that her sons were that day to be hanged. So Robin hastened on to see what he could do to rescue them, and on the way he met a palmer.

Come change thy apparel with me, old churl,  
Come change thy apparel with mine;  
Here are twenty pieces of good broad gold,  
Go feast thy brethren with wine.

The old man was only too glad to make such a good bargain; so Robin put on the palmer's high-crowned hat, his cloak, "patched black and blew and red," his breeks, his hose, and his shoes, all of them worn and patched, and he hung over his shoulder the bags which beggars carried to hold the bread or other food that was given them. Then he went boldly into Nottingham, and there he saw the Sheriff walking along the town. Robin went boldly up to him.

"O save, O save, O sheriff," he said,  
"O save, and you may see!  
And what will you give to a silly old man  
To-day will your hangman be?"

"Some suits, some suits," the sheriff he said,  
"Some suits I'll give to thee;  
Some suits, some suits, and pence thirteen  
To-day's a hangman's fee."

Then Robin he turns him round about,  
And jumps from stock to stone;  
"By the truth of my body," the sheriff he said,  
"That's well jumpt, thou nimble old man."

"I was ne'er a hangman in all my life,  
Nor yet intend to trade;  
But curst be he," said bold Robin,  
"That first a hangman was made."

"I've a bag for meal, and a bag for malt,  
And a bag for barley and corn;  
A bag for bread, and a bag for beef,  
And a bag for my little small horn."

"I have a horn in my pocket,  
I got it from Robin Hood,



## THE ROBIN HOOD BALLADS

---

And still when I set it to my mouth,  
For thee it blows little good."

"O wind thy horn, thou proud fellow,  
Of thee I have no doubt;  
I wish that thou give such a blast  
Till both thy eyes fall out."

The first loud blast that he did blow  
He blew both loud and shrill;  
A hundred and fifty of Robin Hood's men  
Came riding over the hill.

The next loud blast that he did give,  
He blew both loud and amain,  
And quickly sixty of Robin Hood's men  
Came shining over the plain.

"O who are yon," the sheriff he said,  
"Come tripping over the lee?"  
"They're my attendants," brave Robin did say,  
"They'll pay a visit to thee."

They took the gallows from the slack,  
They set it in the glen,  
They hang'd the proud sheriff on that,  
Releas'd their own three men.

In several of the ballads we hear that the Sheriff is hanged or killed, but he always comes to life again, and appears as the villain of the next adventure. The makers of the ballads probably put in his death to make a picturesque ending and to show quite clearly that Robin had the best of it.

There is another ballad, called *Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne*, which tells how Robin and Little John went out together one morning, and saw in the wood a yeoman fully armed and clad from top to toe in capull-hyde (horse-hide).

"Stand you still, master," quoth Little John,  
"Under this trusty tree,  
And I will go to yond wight yeoman,  
To know his meaning trulye."

This proposal made Robin very angry.

"How oft send I my men before  
And tarry myselfe behinde?"

he asked indignantly.



"And it were not for bursting of my bowe,  
John, I wold thy head breake."

So the two quarrelled, and John went off by himself to Barnsdale, while Robin dealt with the stranger.

At Barnsdale Little John found that two of the band had been taken and slain, and that a third, Will Scarlet, was being pursued by the Sheriff and seven score men.

"Yet one shoote I'le shoote," sayes Little John,  
"With Crist his might and mayne;  
I'le make yond fellow that flyes soe fast  
To be both glad and faine."

So he shot, and killed one of the pursuers, but his bow broke, and left him helpless when the Sheriff and some of his men turned upon him.

And it is sayd, when men be met,  
Six can doe more than three:  
And they have tane Little John  
And bound him fast to a tree.

"Thou shalt be drawn by dale and downe,"  
quoth the sheriff,  
"And hanged high on a hill":  
"But thou may fayle," quoth Little John,  
"If it be Christs own will."

Meantime, Robin Hood had met with the stranger, who turned out to be Sir Guy of Gisborne. He had come into the forest to try to capture the famous outlaw, and so win the forty pounds that was set upon his head. They fought together for two hours, and at length Robin overcame Sir Guy and killed him. Then he took off the suit of capull-hyde and put it on himself, took Sir Guy's horn, and set off to Barnsdale to see what had happened to his men. As he came near he blew a loud blast on the horn.

"Hearken! hearken!" sayd the sheriff,  
"I heard noe tydings but good:  
For yonder I heare Sir Guyes horne blowe,  
For he hath slaine Robin Hoode.

"For yonder I heare Sir Guyes horne blowe,  
It blowes so well in tyde,  
For yonder comes that wighty yeoman,  
Cladd in his capull-hyde.



## THE ROBIN HOOD BALLADS

“Come hither, thou good Sir Guy,  
Ask of me what thou wilt have”:  
“I’le none of thy gold,” sayes Robin Hood,  
“Nor I’le none of it have.  
“But now I have slaine the master,” he sayd,  
“Let me goe strike the knave;  
That is all the reward I aske,  
Nor noe other will I have.”  
“Thou art a madman,” said the shiriffe,  
“Thou sholdest have had a knight’s fee;  
Seeing thy asking hath beene soe bad,  
Well granted it shall be.”  
But Little John heard his master speake,  
Well he knew that was his steven;<sup>1</sup>  
“Now shall I be loset,” quoth Little John,  
“With Christs might in heaven.”

So the Sheriff let Robin Hood go close up to Little John, and Robin took out his knife and cut the cords that bound him, and gave him Sir Guy’s bow. As soon as the Sheriff saw Little John with the bow in his hand and ready to shoot,

Towards his house in Nottingham  
He fled full fast away,  
And soe did all his companye,  
Not one behind did stay.

But he cold neither soe fast goe,  
Nor away soe fast run,  
But Little John, with an arrow broade,  
Did cleave his heart in twan.

Another ballad tells how the “fair Matilda,” daughter of Lord Fitzwalter, who had loved Robin from his boyhood, left her home and came in the disguise of a page to join the band, and how she was held in high honour by the outlaws, and how, under the name of Maid Marian, she became their forest queen.

Another tells of Robin’s dealings with Sir Richard of the Lea. Sir Richard was a good knight who had fought with the King in the Holy Land, and who owned a castle and estate just beyond the walls of Nottingham; but he had fallen into misfortune, and was in danger of losing all that he had. His

<sup>1</sup> voice.



son had accidentally killed a knight in a tournament, and the father had been compelled to pay a large sum of money to save the youth from punishment. In order to raise this money he had mortgaged his castle and lands to the Bishop of Hereford, who was a friend of the Sheriff of Nottingham, and equally greedy and grasping. Now the time had come when Sir Richard must pay the debt of £400 or forfeit his property. He could not raise the sum, and so, as he rode through the forest one morning, he was looking very downcast and sorrowful—so sorrowful, indeed, that Robin Hood's men, who met him, were half inclined to let him pass because of his woeful looks. But their master had declared that he would not dine until they brought him a guest, and as they were very hungry he felt that they could not wait until another traveller came along. So they took the knight to Robin, who received him courteously, and invited him to share in the banquet that had been prepared. Sir Richard cheered up a little over the good fare, but when at the end of the meal Robin, according to the custom of the outlaws, asked him for a sum of money before he let him go on his way, he was obliged to confess with shame that he had only ten shillings. At first Robin did not believe this, and bade Little John search him, but when he found that the knight had spoken truth, and when he had heard his story, the outlaw chief was ready to help him. He lent Sir Richard the four hundred pounds, and Sir Richard, promising faithfully to repay it that day twelvemonth, rode joyfully away.

Next day he paid the Bishop, who was very disappointed that he was not able to seize Sir Richard's lands as he had hoped to do. He took the money, and a few days later rode with it to Nottingham, to put it in safe keeping. On the way he was met by some of the outlaws, who brought him to Robin Hood; and after dinner, as he protested that he had only a few silver pennies in his pockets, he was searched. The four hundred pounds was found, and was taken from him, with mock courtesy, and after being obliged to join in the dancing and revels of the outlaws the enraged Bishop was allowed to



depart. And so the knight's debt was repaid without his being any the poorer.

From that day forward Robin Hood had another bitter enemy, besides the Sheriff of Nottingham. The Bishop joined with all his heart in the plans for Robin's capture; but none of these plans were successful, although several times the outlaw chief had a very narrow escape. At the end of the twelve-month, on the day appointed, he went to Sir Richard of the Lea, where the money he had lent was ready for him; but he refused to take it, saying he had already been repaid by the Bishop. The grateful Sir Richard gave all sorts of gifts to him and to his men, and ever after was his devoted friend. When, a little later, King Richard Cœur-de-Lion came to visit his old comrade-in-arms, the knight told him all about his dealings with Robin Hood, and the King was so delighted that he declared he must see this famous outlaw for himself. So he set off into the forest in disguise, and first found out Friar Tuck, who guided him to the headquarters of the band. No one recognized him, and he was able to convince himself that these men were heartily loyal and had only been made outlaws by harsh and unjust laws.

There were all sorts of amusing incidents before the King at length told the outlaws who he was. He gave them all a free pardon, and appointed them the Royal Archers of his body-guard, with Robin as their leader.

Robin Hood's fame grew as time went on, and by and by a special day in the year was set apart for revels and games in his honour. Hugh Latimer, the famous bishop who lived more than three hundred years later, in the reign of Edward VI, said:

I came once myself to a place, riding on a journey, and sent word over-night into the town that I would preach there in the morning, because it was a holiday. The church stood in my way, and I took my horse and rode thither, thinking I should have found a great company at church. When I came there, the church door was fast locked. I tarried there half-an-hour and more; at last, one of the parish comes to me, and says, "Sir, this



is a busy day with us. We cannot hear you, it is Robin Hood's day; the parish are gone abroad to gather for Robin Hood. I pray you, hinder them not." And so I was fain to give place to Robin Hood.

Even to-day he is not forgotten. The old ballads are still remembered, and new songs about the outlaw hero are still being made. Tennyson wrote a play about him called *The Foresters*, and the words which he put into the mouth of Maid Marian are still true, although there is no longer any Sherwood Forest except that which lives on in the Robin Hood ballads:

And yet I think these oaks at dawn and even,  
Or in the balmy breathings of the night,  
Will whisper evermore of Robin Hood.  
We leave but happy memories to the forest.  
We dealt in the wild justice of the woods. . . .

You, good friar,  
You Much, you Scarlet, you dear Little John,  
Your names will cling like ivy to the wood.  
And here perhaps a hundred years away  
Some hunter in day-dreams or half asleep  
Will hear our arrows whizzing overhead,  
And catch the winding of a phantom horn.

In Scotland also the fifteenth century was a great flowering season of ballad-poetry. The native ballad-makers had a crude eloquence and energy of their own, but the Courtly poets, touched by English influences, admired and imitated Chaucer and Gower. Not least in that little band of royal and noble lovers of literature was King James the First, the Poet King, of whom we shall now have something to say.

One wild night early in the year 1406 a small Scottish ship that had put out from the Bass Rock and was sailing southward for France was driven by the storm upon the rocky Yorkshire coast, near Flamborough Head. Those in the ship were taken prisoners by some Norfolk mariners. There was an eleven-year-old boy among them, a handsome little lad, with a kingly bearing and the charm of manner that belonged to the Stuart race; for he was a Stuart prince, James, son of Robert III, the weak and unhappy King of



Scotland. The boy had been sent from his own country to be out of the reach of his uncle, the Duke of Albany, who had brought about the death of the King's eldest son, David, and, as there was great reason to fear, was now plotting against James. France was Scotland's ally, and in France Robert believed that his son would be safe, and could be brought up and educated as befitted a prince.

The storm had landed the boy in England instead of in France, but this should have meant only a short delay, for there was peace at this time between Scotland and England, and there was no reason to fear that hindrances would be put in the way of his proceeding on his journey. But the rough Norfolk sailors into whose hands the ship's company had fallen had their own ideas on the matter. Scotland had for long been looked upon as England's natural enemy, and although they were for the time at peace, there was no friendly feeling between the countries. So they refused to listen to the representations of the nobles who were with the young Prince, and insisted on taking him as a captive to London, where he was brought before King Henry IV at Westminster Palace.

Robert of Scotland had foreseen that some mishap of this kind might occur, and had sent with his son a letter addressed to the English king, explaining that the boy was being sent to France for the purpose of learning the French language, and begging Henry to help him on his way. But the prize was too valuable a one to be readily let slip. "He cannot send him to a better master than myself," said Henry firmly, "for I can speak French passing well." So against all right and justice Henry ordered that the Prince should be held captive in England, and he was sent to the Tower and lodged in the great Keep. He was well treated, and had the best masters that could be found to carry on his education, but no hope was given of his return to Scotland; and when the news was brought to his unhappy father King Robert felt that he had lost this loved son as completely as he had lost the other.



The poor King never held up his head again, and very soon he died.

The Prince grew up in captivity to be a fine, gallant young man, well trained in all princely arts, strong and active and brave. He spent many of the long hours of his confinement in reading, and he came to know the works of Chaucer and Gower and other English poets almost by heart. He had not spent all the time in one place, but had been taken from one castle to another—to Nottingham, Evesham, and finally to Windsor; and it was at Windsor that the great romance of his life—the romance that helped to make him a poet—came to him.

He told the whole story in a poem that he wrote at a later time. One bright May morning he was sitting in his chamber, thinking sadly of the long years of his captivity. He almost despaired of ever getting back to his loved Scotland, although he knew that his people had never ceased their efforts to make some arrangement with the King of England (now Henry V) by which he might be set free. At length, “fortirëd of my thought and woe-begone,” he walked to the window and looked out on the garden below. It was a beautiful garden, surrounded by a blossoming hawthorn hedge, and there were green, shady trees and bright flowers growing within it. The “little sweet nightingale” was pouring out its song, and the garden was full of small birds flitting from bough to bough, and making merry music. To the poor captive Prince it seemed that all creatures except himself were free and happy, and he wondered what he had done that this heavy punishment should have fallen upon him. He tried to comfort himself with the thought that it was God Who had sent his misfortune, and prayed that he might have grace, “Him trewely for to serve in wele and wo.”

Then he looked out once more into the garden, and saw there a young maiden, who seemed to him

The fairest or the freshest younge flower  
That ever I sawe, methought, before th at hour.



## THE POET KING

She was the lovely Lady Joan Beaufort, who had come with her maid and her little dog to sport in the garden. At first sight the Prince fell so deeply in love with her

That suddenly my wit, my countenance,  
My heart, my will, my nature, and my mind,  
Was changed clean right in another kind.

There follow in the poem many verses in praise of the lady's beauty and of the virtue and wisdom which the poet, looking upon her fair countenance, felt sure that she possessed. At length she left the garden and disappeared from the Prince's sight, leaving him the "wofullest wicht," plunged in misery. That night, tired out with lamentation, he fell asleep, and dreamed that he was carried up "from sphere to sphere," until at length he reached the dwelling of Venus, goddess of love. She was ready to help him, but declared that his desperate case needed "the help of other mo than one goddesse," so she sent him, with Good Hope for a guide, to the palace of Minerva, goddess of wisdom. Minerva gave him much good advice, then bade him return to earth and seek out Fortune. Again guided by Good Hope he reached the citadel of Fortune, talked to her, and looked at her great wheel; then

"Fare wel," quod she, and by the ere me toke  
So earnestly, that therewithal I woke.

In the morning he went again to the window from which he had seen his love, and stood musing as to whether all that he had seen could have been a dream. As he stood there a pure white dove came flying to him, bearing in its mouth a sprig of gillyflower. This he took to be a messenger sent from Venus:

"Awake! awake! I bring, lover, I bring  
The newis glad that blissful ben and sure  
Of thy confort; now laugh, and play, and sing,  
That art beside so glad an aventure;  
For in the hevyn decretit<sup>1</sup> is the cure."  
And unto me the flower did present;  
With winges spred, hir wayes forth she went.

The poem ends with a song of thankfulness for the promise that the bird had brought.

<sup>1</sup> decreed.



We do not know how long it was before King James met and spoke with the lady of his love. He probably did not find it very difficult to do so, for, though he was a prisoner, he joined in many of the festivities of the Court. We know that he was present when Katherine, wife of Henry V, was crowned in Westminster Abbey in February 1421, and that he sat at the left hand of the Queen at the banquet that followed. Soon an agreement between England and Scotland was made concerning the terms upon which James was to be released, and in 1423, soon after King Henry VI came to the throne, he was set free. In February he was married, with great state and ceremony, to Lady Joan Beaufort, at the church of St Mary Overy, Southwark, and in March, after nearly twenty years' captivity, he returned to Scotland, taking his bride with him. His poem, which he called *The King's Quair*—that is, "The King's Book"—was finished, we think, a little while before he left England.

There were no more idle, empty hours for King James I after he reached his own country. The kingdom had fallen into terrible disorder; the nobles had become the oppressors of the people and cared little for the law; there was injustice and misery everywhere. King James set to work with a good heart to set things right, and would not let himself be discouraged, although at first his success was small. "If God gives me but a dog's life," he said, "I will make the key keep the castle and the bracken bush the cow throughout Scotland." Some of the nobles hated him because he hindered them from robbing and oppressing the people, but there were many who were his loyal and devoted followers; and the common folk loved him.

In spite of troubles and dangers, these years of rule were happy years for King James and his beautiful wife, for they loved each other dearly, and, even in the crowded, busy life that they led, there came every now and then a few free days which the King could spend quietly with Queen Joan and the seven children who were born to them.



For twelve years the King's struggle against the lawlessness of the country went on, and by the end of that time order and justice had begun to prevail. The love and loyalty that most of the nation bore him had steadily increased, but at the same time the hatred of the few who opposed his reforms had grown more violent. Chief among these were the Grahams. When these disloyal nobles heard that the King was to spend the Christmas of 1436 at Perth they determined to attack him there, while he was unprepared. The holiday had been a very happy one for the King and for his followers, and everyone was sorry that it was nearly over. The last evening, February 20, was spent in music and sports in the great hall, and when bedtime came the King took leave of the company, and retired to the Queen's apartments. Her maidens were attiring her for the night, when there came a loud knocking at the outer door, the clang of armour, and tread of heavy feet in the courtyard. The maidens rushed to secure the door, but found that the bars had been treacherously removed. The King, at the sound of the commotion, hastily returned to the hall, and the terrified attendants besought him to escape, that his life, so precious to the nation, might be saved. He was unwilling to leave his Queen, yet saw that he might do more good from the outside if he could get away; so he took the tongs from the great fireplace, and tore up part of the flooring, and lowered himself into the cellars beneath, from which a passage led to an outlet in the moat. He had forgotten that, by his own orders, the outlet had been stopped up because the balls so often went into it when he was playing tennis. The Queen's maidens threw down the mantle they had just taken from their mistress's shoulders to hide the hole that had been made, then waited, white and trembling, as the heavy steps drew nearer. They heard a scuffle and a cry, and knew that the brave page who guarded the passage outside had been slain. In an agony they rushed to the door once more, but could find nothing that would take the place of the bars that had been removed. Then Catherine Douglas thrust her arm through the iron stanchion,



for which deed she has gone down in history as Kate Barlass. Such a frail bar did not serve to keep the foe back for more than an instant. Catherine, with a broken arm, was thrown roughly to the floor as the fierce intruders rushed in. They demanded of the Queen where the King had gone, and when she would not tell them one of them struck at her with his dagger, and wounded her in the arm. They hastily searched the hall, then rushed to the other chambers; and while they were gone the weeping maidens heard to their horror the King's voice from below. "Let me out," it said, "the way is blocked, and I am being choked." They let down sheets and drew him up, and as he regained the hall his pursuers came rushing back. With shouts of triumph they fell upon him, and in a few moments James lay upon the floor of the hall, his body gashed with many terrible wounds. The Poet King was dead.



---

## *Chapter XII*

### THE MIRACLE PLAY

**I**F you had been a boy or girl born about the beginning of the fourteenth century and living in the fine old town of Chester, there would have been two days in the year to which you would have looked forward with much excitement. One would have been the day of the great October fair; the other would have been Whitsun Monday, on which began the yearly performance of the miracle plays, which lasted for three days and set all the town astir. Your father and mother would have told you that when they were children there had been no great Whitsuntide performance, only separate plays acted in the churchyard or the market-place at Christmas and Easter and other special seasons of the Church's year. The great annual pageant then had been the procession on Corpus Christi day,<sup>1</sup> which had passed through the streets of the city with banners and emblems and priests in gorgeous vestments, and in which members of most of the trade guilds had taken part. You would have known all about the trade guilds; most likely your father would have belonged to one of them. They were associations in which all the men of a certain trade joined together to make rules which should regulate that trade, and to help one another in times of want and sickness. There was the Drapers' Guild, and the Butchers' Guild, and the Guild of the Barbers and Wax Chandlers, of the Painters and Glaziers, of the Cooks and the Glovers and the Saddlers, and many more. Not only in Chester but in all the large towns these guilds had been growing more and more important and useful, and they had undertaken many duties in connexion with the managing and governing of their city. They had been

<sup>1</sup> This festival is held in Roman Catholic countries on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday.



used to prepare pageants to be shown in the Corpus Christi procession, and as, little by little, the management of the miracle plays passed out of the hands of the Church, there were the trade guilds ready to take up the work.

In most of the big towns the great performance of the year was given on Corpus Christi day; in Chester, for some reason that has not been recorded, it was given on the Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of Whitsun week. We know a good deal about the Chester plays, much more than we do about those of most of the other towns. Manuscripts of the complete plays have come down to us, and there are allusions to various performances of them in the records of the time.

If, as we have supposed, you had been living in Chester in those days you would have got up on Whitsun Monday as soon as it began to get light, dressed yourself quickly in your best clothes, and gone out into the streets to watch the crowds of people streaming in from the towns and villages round about, and to see the townsfolk hanging banners and bright stuffs out of their windows until the narrow, grey old streets were full of waving colour. But you would not have been able to wander about very long, for the streets would be filling up quickly, and those who wanted a good place must take up their positions betimes. If you had been fortunate enough to live in a house from which one of the stations where the plays were to be performed could be seen, you would have sat comfortably with your family at the window, and have invited as many of your friends as could crowd into the space to join you.

Soon the play will begin. The City Fathers are gathering at the High Cross, and here comes the herald, bearing a banner in his hand, to announce that the first pageant is on its way. There rolls up a curious wooden structure of two storeys. In the lower part, which is closed in, the players are making ready. In the upper part they will come to act.

The first play is *The Fall of Lucifer*, set forth by the Tanners' Company, and here Satan, with his "feathers all ragged and rent," is the most interesting figure. Then that pageant rolls



## THE MIRACLE PLAY

---

away, to perform the same play at the next appointed place, and the pageant of the Drapers' Company follows with the play of the Creation. In this a number of little birds are let loose into the air, and "geese, swans, ducks, cocks, hens, and other birds with as many strange beasts as can be found" walk about among the actors. The "good symple water-leaders and drawers of the Dee" come next with the play *Noah and the Ark*. There is in this a comic scene, for which no warrant is found in the Bible story, representing Noah's wife refusing to go into the Ark with the rest. Noah pleads and entreats, but she will not come unless her friends may come with her.

They loved me full well, by Christ;  
But<sup>1</sup> thou wilt let them in thy chest  
els rowe forth, Noe, whether thou list,  
And get thee a new wife.

At last Noah's sons take the matter in hand, and since their mother will not come by persuasion, they bring her in by force. "Welcome, wife, into this boat," says Noah, but she answers sharply, "Have that for thy note," and gives him a sounding blow, which sets all the audience laughing.

Next comes *The History of Lot and Abraham*, played by the Barbers and Wax Chandlers. The scene between Abraham and his son Isaac is a beautiful and touching one.

*Isaac.* Father, tell me or I goe,  
Whether I shall have harme or noe.

*Abraham.* Ah, dere God, that me is woe!  
thou bursts my hart in sunder.

*Isaac.* Father, tell me of this case,  
Why you your sword drawen hase,  
and beare yt naked in this place,  
thereof I have great wonder.

*Abraham.* Isaac, sonnë, peace! I pray thee,  
Thou breakes my hartë even in three.

*Isaac.* I praye you, father, leave nothing from me,  
but tell me what you thinke.

*Abraham.* O Isaac, Isaac, I must thee kill.

*Isaac.* Alas! father is that your will,  
Your ownë childe here for to spill

---

<sup>1</sup> unless.



Upon this hillës brynke?  
If I have trespassed in any degree,  
With a yardë<sup>1</sup> you maye beat me,  
put up your sword if your will be  
for I am but a childe.

*Abraham.* O my sonne I am sorry  
to do to thie this great anye:<sup>2</sup>  
God's Commandment do must I  
his workes are ay full mylde.

*Isaac.* Wold God my mother were here with me!  
She woldë knele upon her knee,  
praying you, father, if it might be  
for to save my life.

Father, sith you must needs doe soe,  
let it passe lightlie and overgoe;  
kneling on my kneës two  
Your blessing on me spreade! . . .  
Father, I pray you hyde myne eyne<sup>3</sup>  
That I se not your sword so kene.  
Your stroke, father, wold I not seene,  
lest I against yt grille.<sup>4</sup>

*Abraham.* Ah, sonne, my harte will breake in three  
To heare thee speake such wordes to me.  
Jhesu, on me thou have pittie  
that I have most in mynde.

*Isaac.* Nowe father, I see that I shall dye;  
Almightie God in magistie!  
My soule I offer unto thee;  
Lord to it be kinde!

Then Abraham binds hisson upon the altar and takes a sword  
to kill him; but an angel appears and takes the sword by the  
end and stays the blow.

*Angel.* Abraham my servant dere.

*Abraham.* Loe, Lord, I am all readye here!

*Angel.* Laye not thy sworde in no manere  
On Isake thy deare darlinge;  
And do him no anoye.  
For thou dredes God, wel wotë I,  
That of thy sonne has no mercye,  
To fulfill his byddinge.

When the New Testament is reached there comes the Shep-  
herds' Play, in which four shepherds are seen watching their

<sup>1</sup> a stick.

<sup>2</sup> injury.

<sup>3</sup> eyes.

<sup>4</sup> rebel.



## THE MIRACLE PLAY

---

flocks on Christmas Eve. They take out the provisions they have brought with them, and prepare for supper. Says one shepherd:

Here is bread this day was baken,  
Onyons, garlik and lyckes,<sup>1</sup>  
Butter that was bought in Blacon,  
And green cheese that will grease your cheekes.

Then the next shepherd brings out his store.

And here ale of Halton I have,  
And what meat I had to my hyre;  
A pudding may no man deprave. . . .  
Lo! here a sheepes head souced in ale,  
And a groyne to lay on the grene,  
And soure mylke my wife had on sale:  
A noble supper as well is seene.

Another shepherd produces from his sack "a pigg's foot," "chitterling boiled," and an "ox tongue pared round about." Supper begins, and in the midst of it a bright light is thrown over the scene. The shepherds exclaim in wonder:

What is all this light here  
that shines so bright here  
on my black bearde?  
for to see this sight here,  
a man may be afrighte here,  
for I am aferde.

Then comes the song of the angels, *Gloria in Excelsis*, and after that a voice bidding them go to Bethlehem and seek out the Saviour, Who has that night been born, and is cradled in a manger; and after some discussion they set out, taking with them their gifts—a bell, a flask and spoon, and "a pair of my wyves old hosen."

Play succeeds play until twilight falls and the herald announces that no more can be shown "for lack of day." Then the people go home, to rise early next morning, and take their places, to look and listen as eagerly as before. There are many more plays to be shown, for each of the twenty-four guilds has prepared one and is eager to present it; and so the

<sup>1</sup> leeks.



long list is gone through, until at the end of the third day comes *The Last Judgment*, played by the Weavers' Guild. Then the great festival of the year is over.

Each guild took the greatest pains to have its play presented in the best possible way, and each member subscribed a certain sum to pay for the dresses and the stage properties. Everyone in the town took an interest and a pride in the representations, and they remained popular through the fourteenth, fifteenth, and part of the sixteenth centuries. At the Reformation attempts were made to suppress them, but the people refused to give them up. It was only when changing times and manners caused them to please the audiences no longer that they gradually died out.



---

## Chapter XIII

### THE MORALITIES

THE pleasure that the people took in the miracle plays made them eager for dramatic shows and pageants of every kind, and year by year the number of performances increased, until almost every festival or holiday had its play. These were much less elaborate than those acted at Corpus Christi or Whitsuntide, for nobody had the time to prepare them as carefully as each trade guild prepared its play for the great annual performance. They were usually produced under the direction of the Church, but all sorts of people took part in them, and helped to add those homely touches and references to the life of the time which gave them a fresh and living interest. The habit of introducing allegorical figures, to which the literature of the day had accustomed the people, increased, until at length there grew up a new kind of play, in which all the characters were of this kind. It was really an allegory, just as *The Romaunt of the Rose* and *The Vision of Piers Plowman* were allegories. Its purpose was not so much to tell a story as to set forward a moral truth; and so such plays were called *morals*, or, in later times, *moralities*.

The moral was much better suited than the miracle play for the occasional performances that were now growing so popular. It could be made of almost any length, and could have few characters or many. Few stage properties or dresses were required, and the writers of the morals, since they were not founding their play on a Bible story but were making it up for themselves, were free to introduce special incidents or characters to please special audiences.

The Church had little to do with these morals except in their very early stages, and they did not pass under the control of the town authorities. They were developed and carried on



chiefly by the wandering minstrels, who seized on them with eagerness. These minstrels had for a long time seen their occupation falling from them, for the people no longer cared for their stories or their music and dancing. They had now but small audiences and scanty offerings where once they had gathered full harvests, and so they were quite ready to take up something that promised greater success. They formed themselves quickly into small companies—consisting often of only three men and a boy—got together a few dresses and stage properties, chose among the morals that were being written such as were within their powers (or perhaps wrote their plays for themselves) and set out to travel the countryside.

The larger and richer companies had wagons for their scenery and dresses, and these were sent on in advance under the charge of two or three men, who hired a field or an open space near some town or village and there set up a sort of stage for the performance. Other companies went to the mayor of the town and asked permission to play in the town-hall; and usually the mayor gave permission, on condition that he and the aldermen and other city notables might be present at a private representation, that they might judge whether the play was suitable for the citizens at large. The humbler companies played in whatever barn or open space they could find. Sometimes a nobleman or a rich merchant engaged a company to give a performance before the guests assembled in his hall. At fairs and merrymakings one or more companies always made an appearance, and at Christmastide the players were welcome everywhere.

Some of the morals were dignified and beautiful, teaching a high morality in a simple and often a touching fashion. One of the finest is the famous *Everyman*, which was acted in England during the later years of the fifteenth century. It tells how God grew angry with the race of men because they did not love Him nor keep His law, and how He sent Death to summon Everyman to appear before Him and give an account of what he had done with all the gifts that God had bestowed



upon him. So Death went to Everyman and bade him get ready his reckoning and prepare to take a long journey, and Everyman, in fear and dismay, pleaded to be allowed a little more time. But Death could give no respite.

Thee availeth not to cry, weep, and pray:  
But haste thee lightly that you were gone the journey.

And now out of thy sight I will me hie;  
See thou make thee ready shortly,  
For thou mayst say this is the day  
That no man living may 'scape away.

Then Death went out, and poor Everyman was left to prepare for his dread journey. He bethought him that it would not be so terrible if he had a friend to go with him, so he called on Fellowship, who had often vowed he would stand by him in any trouble. But Fellowship, when he heard that Death had been the messenger, would not go. "For from thee I will depart as fast as I may," he said, and he went off, leaving Everyman to think whom else he could ask.

To my kinsmen I will truly,  
Praying them to help me in my necessity.

But his kinsmen would not go with him either:

Nay, Everyman, I had liefer fast bread and water  
All this five year and more.

Then Everyman remembered his Goods.

All my life I have loved riches;  
If that my Good now help me might  
He would make my heart full light.  
I will speak to him in this distress.  
Where art thou, my Goods and riches?

But Goods refused also, saying that he had only been lent to Everyman, and Everyman would not now have been in this distress if he had used him properly; "Therefore, farewell, and have good day." "I will go then to my Good-Deeds," said Everyman, but his Good-Deeds was so weak and ill that she could not rise from the ground. Yet she wished to help him and told him to go to her sister, Knowledge, who would advise him.

"Everyman, I will go with thee, and be thy guide,  
In thy most need to go by thy side,"



said Knowledge; and she led him to the holy man, Confession, who would, by God's grace, give him comfort. Then Confession bade him submit to penance, that his body might be subdued by abstinence and by scourging; and Everyman submitted humbly, suffering sharp pain, and confessing his sins. Then appeared Good-Deeds, who by this action of his has been restored and strengthened. She declared that she would go with him on his journey, and Knowledge gave him a garment, wet with his tears, that he must wear when he appeared before God.

It is a garment of sorrow.  
From pain it will you borrow;<sup>1</sup>  
Contrition it is,  
That getteth forgiveness;  
It pleaseth God passing well.

Then Good-Deeds bade him call to him "three persons of great might," his Discretion, his Strength, and his Beauty, and Knowledge bade him call also his Five-Wits. All these promised to stand by him, but before they set out on their journey Knowledge advised Everyman to go to a priest and receive the Holy Sacrament and extreme unction. So Everyman went, and returned after a time ready to set out, and he led the way, the others following him.

Then when they had gone some way on the road faintness came upon him.

Alas, I am so faint I may not stand,  
My limbs under me do fold;  
Friends, let us not turn again to this land,  
Not for all this world's gold,  
For into this cave must I creep  
And turn to the earth and there to sleep.

Discretion and Strength and Beauty and Five-Wits, when they found that Everyman must go into the grave, would stay with him no longer; even Knowledge could only go with him to the threshold; but Good-Deeds went with him into the presence of the Lord, where the angels received him with songs of joy.

<sup>1</sup> Act as surety or pledge against pain.



## THE MORALITIES

---

The play ended with an exhortation from a learned doctor:

And he that hath his account whole and sound,  
High in heaven he shall be crowned.  
Unto which place God bring us all thither  
That we may live body and soul together  
Thereto help the Trinity,  
Amen, say ye, for Saint Charity.

Few of the morals kept up to the high level of *Everyman*. In many of them humorous or homely incidents were introduced which pleased the audience, but did not help the moral teaching of the play. *The Castell of Perseverance* was one of the favourite morals, but it could only be performed by the larger and richer companies, as it required a large number of actors and rather elaborate scenery. Five scaffolds had to be set up, with a structure in the midst to represent the Castle of Perseverance. This castle was the abode of Man, and the forces of Good and Bad Angels attacked it, struggling together for the possession of his soul. The good angels fought with roses, the emblems of Our Lord's passion; Belial, the leader of the bad angels, had "gunpowder brennyng in pipes in his hands and in his ears." It is probable that Belial was a sort of comic figure, like the devils that had been introduced into the miracle plays, and as time went on the part taken by these comic characters in the morals grew larger and larger. A character called the Vice, who was a mixture of clown and devil, appeared in nearly all the plays. He carried a dagger of lath, with which he belaboured all who came in his way; he played tricks on the devil, and usually got the better of him; and sometimes at the end of the play he leapt on the devil's back and rode him off the stage, while the people shouted with laughter.

As time went on some of the great noblemen set up their own companies of players, who wore their master's badge and were under his protection. They played for him at such times as he wanted them, and at other times they travelled through the country like the rest of the players. At first all



the companies played morals, but soon some of them began to introduce into their plays characters that were not taken from the Bible narrative and were not personifications of abstract qualities. So they prepared the way for the Elizabethan drama, of which we shall have to speak in a later chapter.

---

## Chapter XIV

### OUR EARLIEST PRINTED BOOKS

#### I. WILLIAM CAXTON

ONE of the greatest days in the history of England is the day on which William Caxton set up his printing press in a house near by the Abbey of Westminster. Thirty-five years before he had left his Kentish home and gone as an apprentice to a cloth merchant in Flanders. He had worked hard, and risen year by year until he had become one of the foremost of the merchant company. Busy as he had been, he had found time to travel a little and to examine the things that were new or strange in the life around him. He visited Cologne, and there he saw one of the new printing presses at work; and this interested him so strongly that from that time onward he made the study of the art of printing the chief business of his days. At various places throughout Germany and the Low Countries men were experimenting with the new art, improving little by little the first rough presses they had made. Caxton looked and learned, and about 1474 he set up a printing press of his own at Bruges, with Colard Mansion, a Flemish illuminator, as his assistant. Two years later he came home to his native country, resolved to practise there the art of printing, which, as he said, he had learned "with great labour and expense."

He took the house at Westminster, and according to the custom of the time he set up a sign over its doorway—the Sign of the Red Pale. He had come just at the right time, for the number of people in England who could read was increasing quickly, and the copyists, though they worked their hardest, could not produce all the books that were required. Caxton set himself to increase the supply. He printed service books



and psalters, and lives of the saints, and all sorts of books for use in the monastery schools. He printed romances and fables and poems for the delight of those who were finding out how good it was to be able to read stories for themselves. He took pains to find out what would please the people, and though he was not entirely guided by the public taste, but printed his own favourites also, yet if we look carefully at the list of the books that came from the Red Pale during the years between 1476 and 1491 (the year of Caxton's death) we shall know something of the books that English folks were reading in the reigns of Edward IV, Edward V, and Henry VII.

The first book he printed—except perhaps some small pamphlets—was *The History of Jason*; the second was Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. This was not quite as successful as he had hoped—perhaps because there were so many manuscripts of the poem in existence—but Caxton was not discouraged and he printed another edition of it in 1483, as well as several other of Chaucer's works.

Another important book printed at the Red Pale was *The Golden Legend*, which Caxton himself translated, using both the Latin and the French versions. It was a very long book indeed, and we should most likely think it very uninteresting. It contained the lives of an enormous number of saints, some of them well known, and some whose names few people have ever heard. But the readers of that day bought the book eagerly and read it with delight. They were thrilled by the marvels of which it told; they liked its downright, homely humour; and they approved of its strong moral teaching. Most of the readers of the Middle Ages liked a moral with their stories; they had not yet reached the stage when they could find the moral for themselves.

## II. MALORY'S "MORTE D'ARTHUR"

Much more interesting to us is the book that Caxton printed in 1485—*Le Morte d'Arthur*. Here was the old British legend



again, with King Arthur and his queen Guinevere, his Knights of the Round Table, and the fair ladies of his Court. Sir Thomas Malory, an English knight of whom we know very little, not even in what part of the country he lived, had “diligently searched through all the remnants of the world’s scattered antiquity” and had “made selections from various authors concerning the valour and the victories of the most renowned King Arthur of the Britons.” He found out all the old legends and poems and chronicles and romances that had ✓ to do with King Arthur, and from these he made a book, retelling the old stories in a simple, delightful fashion, and adding to them something of the richness and colour of the Middle Ages. His knights wander through an England that is made up of great forests, and shining rivers, and green meadows a-bloom with fair flowers, and towns showing dim and mysterious through silvery mists. In every forest there is a foe to be fought and a damsel to be rescued; every river has a ford guarded by a giant or by a shield that bears a challenge. In each meadow are “many pavilions pight<sup>1</sup> of silk and divers colours,” and fair ladies within them; in each town a tournament or a joust is going on, or a feast, or a “right rich wedding.” No one lives anywhere except in a castle, and of these there is no lack, and no one, save the serving-men, does any work except fighting. The virtues most highly thought of are courage and truth and loyalty, and the knights serve their ladies with the courtly observances and reverent devotion laid down in the laws of chivalry. It is a very different world from the world in which the Britons of the sixth century lived and fought, but it has its charm, and the old stories fit happily into their new setting.

“I have,” wrote Caxton, in his preface to *Le Morte d’Arthur*,

after the simple cunning<sup>2</sup> that God hath sent me . . . enprised to imprint a book of the noble histories of the said King Arthur, and of certain of his Knights, after a copy unto me delivered; which copy Sir Thomas Malory did take out of certain books of

<sup>1</sup> pitched.

<sup>2</sup> skill.



French and reduced it into English. And I, according to my copy, have down set it in print, to the intent that noble men may see and learn the noble acts of chivalry, the gentle and virtuous deeds that some knights used in those days, by which they came to honour, and how they that were vicious were punished, and oft put to shame and rebuke; humbly beseeching all noble lords and ladies, with all other estates of what state or degree they be of, that shall see and read in this present book and work, that they take the good and honest acts in their remembrance, and follow the same. Wherein they shall find many joyous and pleasant histories, and the noble and renowned acts of humanity, gentleness, and chivalry. For herein may be seen noble chivalry, courtesy, humanity, friendliness, hardiness, love, friendship, cowardice, murder, hate, virtue, and sin. Do after the good and leave the evil, and it shall bring you unto good fame and renown.

Some day you will read these "joyous and pleasant histories" for yourselves, but that you may know what they are like I will give you here some extracts from the story of Sir Gareth.

King Arthur was keeping the feast of Pentecost with his knights when there came into the hall two men richly dressed,

and upon their shoulders there leaned the goodliest young man and the fairest that ever they saw, and he was large, long, and broad in the shoulders and well visaged, and the fairest and the largest hands that ever man saw, but he fared as though he might not go nor bear himself, but if he leaned upon their shoulders. Anon, as King Arthur saw him there was made silence and room, and right so they went with him unto the high dais, without saying any word, and then this big young man drew him back, and easily stretched up straight, saying to King Arthur, "God bless you, and all your fair fellowship, and in especial the fellowship of the Round Table. And for this cause I am come hither, to pray you to give me three gifts, and they shall not be unreasonably asked, but that ye may worshipfully and honourably grant them to me and to you no great hurt nor loss. And as for the first gift I will ask now, and the other two gifts I will ask at the same day twelve months wheresoever that ye hold your high feast." "Now ask," said King Arthur, "and ye shall have your petition." "Now, sir," said he, "this is my petition for this feast, that ye will give me meat and drink sufficiently for these twelve months, and at that day I will ask my other two gifts." "My fair son," said King Arthur, "ask better, I counsel thee, for this is but a



simple asking, for my heart giveth to thee greatly that thou art come of men of worship, and greatly my conceit faileth me but that thou shalt prove a man of right great worship." "Sir," said he, "as for that, be it as it may be, I have asked that I will ask." "Well," said King Arthur, "you shall have meat and drink enough: I never defended<sup>1</sup> that none, neither my friend nor foe. But what is thy name? I would fain know." "I cannot tell you," said he. "That have I marvelled of thee," said the King, "that thou knowest not thine own name, and thou art one of the goodliest young men that ever I saw." Then the noble King Arthur betook him unto the steward, Sir Kay, and charged him that he should give him of all manner of meats and drinks of the best, "and also that he have all manner of finding, as though he were a lord's son." "That shall little need," said Sir Kay, "to do such cost upon him, for I dare well undertake that he is a villein born, and never will make a man, for if he had been come of a gentleman, he would have asked of you horse and harness, but such as he is he hath asked. And since he hath no name, I shall give him a name, that shall be Beaumains, that is to say, fair hands; and into the kitchen I shall bring him, and there he shall have brewis every day, that he shall be as fat by the twelve months' end as a pork hog." Right so the two men that had brought him departed, and left him to Sir Kay, that scorned and mocked him.

So the youth "was put in the kitchen, and lay every night as the boys of the kitchen did; and so he endured all those twelve months and never displeased man nor child, but always he was meek and mild." And at the end of the twelve months there came a damsel to Arthur's Court beseeching him that he would give her a knight to go to the help of a lady who was besieged in her castle by a tyrant called the Red Knight of the Red Lands. Then up started Beaumains, demanding that the quest should be given to him in fulfilment of the King's promise, and the King granted it to him, and that he should be made a knight.

"Fie on thee," said the damsel, "shall I have none but one that is your kitchen page?" Then was she wroth, and took her horse and departed. And with that there came one to Beaumains, and told him that his horse and armour was come for him, and there was a dwarf come with all things that him needed, in the richest manner. Thereat all the Court had much marvel from whence came all that gear. So when he was armed

<sup>1</sup> denied.



there was none but few so goodly a man as he was. . . . When he had overtaken the damsel, anon she said, "What doest thou here? Thou stinkest all of the kitchen; thy clothes be all bawdy of the grease and tallow that thou hast gotten in King Arthur's kitchen. . . . What art thou but a lazy lubber and a turner of broaches<sup>1</sup> and a washer of dishes!" "Damsel," said Sir Beaumains, "say to me what ye like, I will not go from you whatsoever ye say, for I have undertaken of King Arthur for to achieve your adventure, and I shall finish it to the end, or I shall die therefore." "Fie on thee, kitchen knave."

Many adventures they met with on their way, and in each Beaumains showed himself a true knight and overthrew his adversary; but the damsel still called him "kitchen knave," and bade him ride where the wind would not bring the smell of the kitchen from him to her. But always Sir Beaumains answered her courteously, and treated her as a good knight should treat his lady, and at last she became ashamed of the ill words she had given him.

"Alas," said she, "fair Sir Beaumains, forgive me all that I have mis-said and mis-done against you." "With all my heart," said Sir Beaumains, "I forgive it you, for ye did nothing but as ye ought to do, for all your evil words pleased me; and, damsel," said Sir Beaumains, "since it liketh you to speak thus fair to me, wot ye well it gladdeth greatly mine heart; and now meseemeth there is no knight living but I am able enough for him."

At last they came near the castle of her sister, Dame Lyones, which was besieged by the Red Knight, and round about it were great trees. And on these trees Sir Beaumains saw forty knights hung by their necks, all richly armed, with swords and shields and gilded spurs. "All these knights came hither," said the damsel, whose name was Linet, "to rescue my sister, Dame Lyones, and when the Red Knight of the Red Lands had overcome them, he put them to this shameful death, without mercy and pity, and in the same wise he will serve you, but if<sup>2</sup> ye quit you the better." Then Beaumains declared that he would die in battle rather than yield, and presently they came to a sycamore tree whereon hung a horn of elephant's bone, the largest he had ever seen. "This horn the Red

<sup>1</sup> spits.

<sup>2</sup> unless.



Knight hung there," said Linet, "and any coming against him must blow the horn, and then he will come out to do battle." Then Beaumains took the horn, and blew on it so loudly that the whole castle rang; and up leaped many knights and came out from their tents, which were pitched round about the castle, to see who had blown the horn. The Red Knight armed himself hastily and came out, "and all was blood red, his armour, spear, and shield, and an earl buckled his helmet upon his head; and they brought him a red spear and a steed."

Then Linet showed Sir Beaumains her sister, Dame Lyones, looking out from a window. "She seemeth afar the fairest lady that ever I looked upon, and truly," said he, "I ask no better quarrel than now to do battle for her." The Red Knight came up and bade him beware lest the fate of the knights who had been hanged should fall upon him also. But Beaumains felt so strong in the sudden love that had come upon him for the Lady Lyones just through seeing her as she looked out of the window that he had no fear of being vanquished. So they made ready for battle, and at the first shock each smote the other so great a blow that both fell to the ground, and all those who watched thought that their necks were broken.

Then they lightly avoided their horses and put their shields before them and drew their swords and ran together like two fierce lions, and either gave other such buffets upon their helmets that they reeled both backward two strides; and then they recovered both, and hewed great pieces from their harness and their shields, that a great part fell in the fields.

And thus still they fought till it was past noon, and would not stop, until at last they both lacked wind, and then they stood wagging, staggering, panting, blowing and bleeding so that all those who beheld them for the most part wept for pity. And when they had rested them awhile they went to battle again, trasing, rasing, and foining as two boars. And sometimes they ran the one against the other, as it had been two wild rams, and hurtled so together that they fell to the ground grovelling. And sometime they were so amazed that either took the other's sword instead of their own. Thus they endured till even-song time, that



there was none that there beheld them might know whether was likeliest to win the battle; and their armour was so sore hewn that men might see their naked sides, and in other places they were naked, but ever the naked places they defended.

So they fought on, and once Sir Beaumains went down with the Red Knight on top of him. But Linet called to him to take courage and remember her sister, so that fresh strength came to him, and he struggled to his feet, caught up his sword, and smote so thick and fast upon his foe that the sword was struck out of the Red Knight's hand and he fell to the ground. Then Sir Beaumains would have killed him, but he cried for mercy. "I may not spare your life," said Sir Beaumains, "because of the shameful death to which you have put so many knights." But the Red Knight swore that he had done those things in fulfilment of a vow he had made to a lady, and so at last Sir Beaumains spared his life on condition that he asked pardon of the Lady Lyones and made reparation to her, and that if she would forgive him he should go to King Arthur's Court to ask pardon for his evil deeds. And this he did.

There is a great deal more of the story of Sir Beaumains, who turns out to be really Sir Gareth, son of King Arthur's sister, but all that you must read for yourself some day in Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*.

### III. FROISSART'S "CHRONICLES"

Another book, not quite as early as these others, but printed within fifty years of the setting up of the printing press in England, is Froissart's *Chronicles*. John Froissart, who wrote it, was born about three years before Chaucer. He was a Frenchman who came over to England when he was twenty-three years old and quickly rose to favour in the Court of Edward III. Queen Philippa made him her secretary, and he had every opportunity of going on with the work he had begun two or three years before—a history of the French wars. He listened to all the tales of those who had taken part in them, and asked



many questions; he made expeditions to the places where battles had been fought, and heard what the people in the country round about could tell him. He read every chronicle and every record he could find; and then he wrote his own chronicle, and made it so full and vivid and interesting that we can scarcely believe he did not see the events he described with his own eyes. He continued his chronicle to the reign of Richard II, and told of the rising led by Wat Tyler, and of "the great mischief and rebellion of moving of the common people, by which deed England was at a point to have been lost beyond recovery." All the *Chronicles* were written in French, and they were not translated into English until in 1522 Lord Berners, who had been Henry VIII's Chancellor of the Exchequer, undertook the work. He says:

I read diligently the four volumes or books of Sir John Froissart, of the country of Hainault, which I judged commodious, necessary, and profitable to be had in English, sith they treat of the famous acts done in our parts; and specially they redound to the honour of Englishmen. What pleasure shall it be to the noble gentlemen of England to see, behold, and read the high enterprises and famous acts and glorious deeds done and achieved by their valiant ancestors!

But Froissart did not give all the glory of the war to Englishmen. He told his story fairly, and bestowed praise or blame where either was deserved. To him Edward III was the very model of a perfect knight, but he shows him as sometimes stern and pitiless. Queen Philippa he loved with a loyal affection, and he delighted to tell of her virtues and her graces. The account of the six burghers of Calais illustrates very well Froissart's qualities as a story-teller.

The King had sent a message to Sir John of Vienne, the captain of the besieged town, saying that

all the grace that he shall find now in me is that they let six of the chief burgesses of the town come out bare-headed, bare-footed, and bare-legged and in their shirts, with halters about their necks, with the keys of the town and castle in their hands, and let the six yield themselves purely to my will, and the residue I will take to mercy.



Then Sir John went unto the market-place and sounded the common bell; then at once men and women assembled there; then the Captain made report of all that he had done, and said, "Sirs, it will be none otherwise: therefore now take advice and make a short answer."

Then all the people began to weep and to make such sorrow, that there were none so hard of heart, if they had seen them, but that would have had great pity of them: the Captain himself wept piteously.

At last the most rich burgess of all the town, called Eustace de St Pierre, rose up and said openly: "Sirs, great and small, great mischief it should be to suffer to die such people as be in this town, other by famine, or otherwise, when there is a means to save them. I think he or they should have great merit of our Lord God that might keep them from such mischief. As for my part, I have so good trust in our Lord God, that if I die in the quarrel to save the residue, that God would pardon me; wherefore to save them I will be the first to put my life in jeopardy."

When he had thus said, every man worshipped him, and divers kneeled down at his feet with dire weeping and sore sighs. Then another honest burgess rose and said, "I will keep company with my gossip Eustace." He was called John d'Aire. Then rose up Jaques of Wissant, who was rich in goods and heritage; he said also that he would hold company with his two cousins in likewise. So did Peter of Wissant his brother; and then rose two others; they said they would do the same. Then they went and apparelled them as the King desired.

The six burgesses went out by the gate of the town and were brought before King Edward.

They kneeled down and held up their hands and said, "Gentle King, behold here we six, who were burgesses of Calais and great merchants; we have brought to you the keys of the town and of the castle, and we submit ourselves clearly into your will and pleasure, to save the residue of the people of Calais who have suffered great pain. Sir, we beseech your grace to have mercy and pity on us through your high nobleness."

Then all the earls and barons and other that were there wept for pity. The King looked sternly on them, for greatly he hated the people of Calais for the great damages and displeasures they had done him on the sea before. Then he commanded their heads to be stricken off: then every man required the King for mercy, but he would hear no man in that behalf: then Sir Walter of Manny said: "Ah, noble King, for God's sake refrain your courage: ye have the name of sovereign nobleness: therefore, now do not a thing that should blemish your renown, nor to give



cause to some to speak of you villainy. Every man will say it is a great cruelty to put to death such honest persons who by their own wills put themselves into your grace to save their company."

Then the King turned away from him, and commanded to send for the hangman, and said, "They of Calais have caused many of my men to be slain, wherefore these shall die in likewise."

Then the Queene kneeled down and sore weeping said, "Ah, gentle sir, since I passed the sea in great peril, I have desired nothing of you: therefore now I humbly require in the honour of the Son of the Virgin Mary and for the love of me that ye will take mercy of these six burgesses."

The King beheld the Queene and stood still in a study a space, and then said: "Ah, dame, I would ye had been as now in some other place; ye make such request to me that I cannot deny you. Wherefore I give them to you, to do your pleasure with them." Then the Queene caused them to be brought into her chamber, and made the halters to be taken from their necks, and caused them to be newly clothed, and gave them their dinner at their leisure; and then she gave each of them six nobles, and caused them to be brought out of the host in safeguard and set at their liberty.

---

## *Chapter XV*

### VISIONS OF THE RENAISSANCE

#### I. THE SCHOLAR'S VISION

**W**E will try first to imagine how a young man who had grown up from childhood to youth during the reign of Henry VII would look upon the new world that was opening before Englishmen when the young king Henry VIII came to the throne. We will suppose him to be the son of a rich London merchant, one who was interested in all that was going on, and to whose house came scholars and men of affairs, and visitors from distant lands bringing news of stirring events and great movements. In his boyhood he had been sent to school—perhaps to St Paul's or St Andrew's or one of the smaller grammar schools, of which there were a good many by this time. He had learned to read and write, and had been taught a good deal of Latin, and it had been impressed upon him that Latin was the language of scholars in which nearly everything that was worth reading had been written. He had learned a little geography and had been told that the earth was the centre of the universe and that all the heavenly bodies revolved round it. He had only very vague ideas about any of the countries beyond the seas, and believed implicitly the stories of Sir John Mandeville and other travellers. On Sundays and holy days he went to church, and was taught that the Pope was the Supreme Head of the Church, and God's representative on earth; and although he had heard a great deal about the failings and even the wicked deeds of some of the monks and friars it had never entered his head to question the authority of the Church. He never dreamed of trying to find out for himself whether what he had been taught was true; that would have seemed to him a daring



and a wicked thing, and one certain to bring a terrible punishment.

When he grew old enough to understand the talk that went on between his father and the visitors who came to the house he found it often very interesting and exciting. He heard of a man named Christopher Columbus who had sailed from Spain with three small ships hoping to find a new way to India, and who had, it was now realized, discovered a great continent that no one had known anything about. This Columbus had come back to Europe with wonderful tales to tell, and had brought with him six natives from the new country, and native products, to prove that what he told was true.

At other times the boy heard a great deal about the scholars who had fled from Constantinople when the town was sacked by the Turks in 1453, and had brought with them precious manuscripts from its great library. Most of these scholars had gone to one of the towns of Northern Italy, and there the manuscripts had aroused great interest. They contained the works of an ancient people, the Greeks, whose civilization was even further away than that of the Romans. Everyone seemed to be seized with a desire to learn Greek. The scholars from Constantinople went about lecturing and teaching, and from every country in Europe men flocked to hear them. Some wished to learn Greek that they might read the works contained in the manuscripts, and those who did so declared that these had given them a wider view of life and new ideals of virtue and beauty. Others looked on Greek simply as the language of the New Testament, and learned it eagerly that they might read the Gospels in the original. The boy did not understand all that he heard about this new learning, but he understood enough to know that great and wonderful things were happening, and that a wide new field of knowledge was opened to those who would venture out and explore.

By and by the boy went to Oxford, and there he heard a great deal more about this new learning. There were men



there who had been to Italy and had learned this wonderful Greek language which was the key to all knowledge, and now they were lecturing to the university students and inspiring them with the same enthusiasm that they felt themselves. John Colet was lecturing on St Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians and showing an entirely new way of interpreting the Scriptures. He put aside all the learned notes and comments and far-fetched explanations that the schoolmen of the Middle Ages had loved to build up around each passage, and took the words simply as they stood, as being a direct message from God to each individual soul. It was a startling method to boys who had been brought up as the boy of whom we have been speaking had been brought up. Here, again, was a new way opening before him.

He heard also rumours of a new theory of the universe which, it was said, was held by several eminent mathematicians, notably by Copernicus, a Prussian scholar. Copernicus believed that the sun, and not the earth, was the centre of the universe, and that the earth, with all the other planets, was perpetually travelling in a fixed path round the sun, while at the same time it turned on its own axis. It was a dizzy notion, but the idea of the earth adventuring into space instead of standing fixed and immovable fitted well with the spirit of daring curiosity that was moving her sons.

When the young man left the university he was filled (as were so many others at that time, old as well as young) with this spirit of daring curiosity and with a longing to be doing something and finding out something for himself. Nothing seemed impossible. The old barriers that had cramped man and shut him in—body, soul, and spirit—were breaking down, and leaving him free to go out and look for truth and beauty and happiness wherever he thought they were to be found. He began to see visions of a perfect world waiting somewhere for man to enter in and enjoy it; and this vision gave to life a joy and a meaning that it had not had before.

All over England—all over Europe—men and women were



seeing such visions. They were not at all alike, for each man's idea of a perfect world is different from that of anybody else. Some people tried to tell others what they saw, and this was difficult, for a vision, like a dream, often seems unnatural and a little silly when it is put into words. Just a few people managed to do it so that others could see something of what they had seen; and one of those who succeeded best was Thomas More.

He was a little older than the youth of whom we have been thinking, for he was born in 1478. His father was a rich London lawyer, who had sent his son to be brought up in the household of Archbishop Morton. Here the tall, grey-eyed, restless, sunny-tempered youth quickly became a favourite. He was the life of everything that was going on. He acted and danced and sang and by his pleasant wit he kept all the company merry. He had more opportunities than the merchant's son of hearing about what was going on in the world, and he was deeply interested in everything that he heard. The accounts of the Greek scholars in Italy and of the wonderful Greek literature that had been given to Europe roused in him an immense enthusiasm, and when he went up to Oxford he attended the lectures of William Grocyn, one of the most famous of the scholars who had hurried to Italy when the first news of the learning to be gained there had reached England. Thomas More was a quick and eager student, and he soon became a passable Greek scholar. He delighted in the noble ideals that Greek literature set before him, and longed to make them known far and wide. Under all his gaiety was a deep yearning after righteousness and a passionate desire to help to make the world as lovely and as happy a place as he believed God intended it to be.

When his student days were over he still went on reading and learning. He made friends with nearly all the famous scholars of the day, with Linacre and Colet, and with Erasmus, the marvellous scholar from Holland. He studied law at Lincoln's Inn, and became a great lawyer and afterward a Member of Parliament. He lectured and taught and



did all that he could to help on the new learning. Everybody loved him because of his happy, kindly nature and his keen, bright wit. "What," said Erasmus, "has nature ever created more gentle, more sweet, more happy than the genius of Thomas More?"

All through this busy life the vision of a beautiful country where men could be free and happy never left him, and as he came to see more of the conditions under which many of his countrymen lived, of the bitterness that came from religious differences, the evils that followed wars fought simply to satisfy a king's ambition, and the misery that came from harsh and unjust laws, the vision grew clearer and more definite.

At length, when he was about thirty-six years old, he tried to put this vision into words. He wrote a book which he called *Utopia*, which means "Nowhere"; and in this book he pretended that while he stayed at Antwerp, to which city he had been sent by the King on a mission of State, he had been introduced by a citizen of Antwerp, one Peter Giles, to "a certain stranger, a man well stricken in age, with a black, sun-burned face, a long beard, and a cloak cast homely about his shoulders, whom by his favour and apparel forthwith I judged to be a mariner." He *was* a mariner, and his name was Ralph Hythloday, and he was very ready to give to Peter Giles and Thomas More an account of his travels in the newly discovered regions of the world, and especially of a certain island called Utopia. This island, he said, was "in shape like to the new moon," at its broadest part two hundred miles, and fetching a circuit of five hundred miles. The approach to it was dangerous and difficult, so that few strangers visited it. It contained fifty-four "large and fair cities," of which "they that be nighest together be twenty-four miles asunder."

The Utopians choose their own rulers; all of these, except the prince, whose office is for life, rule for one year only. Everyone learns a craft,

the most common being clothworking in wool or flax, or masonry, or the smith-craft, or the carpenter's science. . . . Of their



garments, which throughout all the island be of one fashion (saving that there is a difference between the man's garment and the woman's, between the married and the unmarried) and this one continues for evermore unchanged, seemly and comely to the eye, no let to the moving and wielding of the body, also fit both for summer and winter: as for these garments (I say) every family maketh their own.

Everyone works for six hours before noon, and at noon

they go straight to dinner; and after dinner, when they have rested two hours then they work three hours, and upon that go to supper. About eight o'clock of the evening they go to bed; eight hours they give to sleep. All the void time that is between the hours of work, sleep and meat, that they be suffered to bestow every man as he liketh best himself.

Every city is divided into four parts, and there is a market-place in each part to which the produce from the country round is brought.

From hence the father of every family, or every householder, fetcheth whatever he and his have need of, and carrieth it away with him without money, without exchange, without gage, pawn or pledge.

There are certain great halls in the city, a hall for every thirty families, and in these halls they meet to dine. The children under five years old sit in a separate room with their nurses.

All the other children of both kinds, as well boys as girls, that be under the age of marriage, do either serve at the tables, or else if they be too young thereto, yet they stand by with marvellous silence. That which is given to them from the table they eat, and other several dinner-time they have none. . . .

Of gold and silver they keep a store, in case of a necessity arising to buy from other countries; but in order that the people may not learn to value these metals, they make of them all their meanest household vessels, and the chains and fetters of their bondsmen; and they put rings and chains of gold upon misdoers. Precious stones they give to their children for playthings, and the children when they grow older put them away, as children in other countries put away their toys.

Once ambassadors from the Anemoleans came to Amaurote; and because they dwell far hence and had very little acquaintance with them, hearing that they were all apparelled alike and that



very rudely and homely; thinking them not to have the things which they did not wear; being therefore more proud than wise; determined in the gorgeousness of their apparel to represent very gods, and with the bright shining and glistening of their gay clothing to dazzle the eyes of the silly poor Utopians. So there came in three ambassadors with one hundred servants all apparelled in changeable colours; the most of them in silks; the ambassadors themselves (for at home in their own country they were noblemen) in cloth of gold, with great chains of gold, with gold hanging at their ears, with gold rings upon their fingers, with brooches and aglets of gold upon their caps, which glistened full of pearls and precious stones; to be short, trimmed and adorned with all those things which among the Utopians were either the punishment of bondmen, or the reproach of infamed persons, or else trifles for young children to play withal. Therefore it would have done a man good at his heart to have seen how proudly they displayed their peacock's feathers, how much they made of their painted sheaths, and how loftily they set forth and advanced themselves, when they compared their gallant apparel with the poor raiment of the Utopians. For all the people were swarmed forth into the streets. And on the other side it was no less pleasure to consider how much they were deceived, and how far they missed of their purpose, being contrariwise taken than they thought they should have been. For to the eyes of all the Utopians except very few, which had been in other countries for some reasonable cause, all that gorgeousness of apparel seemed shameful and reproachful. Insomuch that they most reverently saluted the vilest and most abject of them for lords; passing over the ambassadors themselves without any honour; judging them by their wearing of golden chains to be bondmen. Yea, you should have seen children also, that had cast away their pearls and precious stones, when they saw the like sticking upon the ambassadors' caps, dig and push their mothers under the sides, saying thus to them: "Look, mother, how great a lubber doth yet wear pearls and precious stones as though he were a little child still." But the mother, yea, and that also in good earnest: "Peace, son," saith she; "I think he be some of the ambassadors' fools." Some found fault to their golden chains as to no use nor purpose, being so small and weak that a bondman might easily break them, and again so wide and large, that when it pleased him, he might cast them off, and run away at liberty whither he would. But when the ambassadors had been there a day or two, and saw so great abundance of gold so lightly esteemed, yea, in no less reproach than it was with them in honour; and besides that more gold in the chains and gyves of one fugitive bondman than all the costly ornaments of them three was worth, they began to abate their courage and for very shame laid away all that gorgeous array, whereof they were so proud. And specially



when they had talked familiarly with the Utopians, and had learned all their fashions and opinions.

These and many other things concerning the laws and customs of Utopia Sir Thomas More recorded in his book; and he ended a little sadly: "So must I needs confess and grant that many things be in the Utopian weal public which in our cities I may rather wish for, than hope after."

Some of us, perhaps, would not much care to live in More's Utopia; some of us may see nothing remarkable in the account he gives of its customs and institutions. But if we consider carefully the condition of England at the time when he lived we shall see how far in advance of his time he was, and shall understand how much insight and how much courage went to the making of the book. It was written in Latin and not translated into English until 1551, so that only the learned of his own day could read it.

Many people think that the home at Chelsea which Sir Thomas More made for himself and his family was an even better example of an ideal community than the one pictured in *Utopia*. It was a plain and unpretentious house, with a pleasant garden leading down to the river. Inside, it was comfortable and beautiful, for More loved beauty, as the Greeks loved it; but there was no luxury or display; the style of living was simple, though dignified and liberal. There he lived with his wife, his son, his son's wife, his three daughters and their husbands, eleven grandchildren, his servants, and various friendless dependants who found there a happy refuge. Erasmus, who visited him often, tells us what a delightful house it was, with its merry children, and the rabbits and the monkey and the other animals who were their pets; he tells of the many notable visitors who came there, of the laughter and music and talk that went on. "There is never any seen idle; the head of the house governs it, not by a lofty carriage and oft rebukes, but by gentleness and amiable manners. Every member is busy in his place, performing his duty with alacrity; nor is sober mirth wanting."



If More could have been transported to his own kingdom of Utopia he would surely have grievously missed this beautiful family life. But, on the other hand, he would not have had to suffer at the will of a tyrannical king, and to end his noble life on the scaffold.

Long before More's death the bright hopes of the little group of scholars who had made the beginning of Henry VIII's reign famous had faded. They had looked forward to peaceful, busy years during which knowledge should spread among the people and lead them, easily and naturally, to a better way of living. But instead there had come religious strife, and in the strong feeling that this had called forth learning had been, except by the very few, neglected. The scholars had been followed by the reformers.

## II. THE REFORMER'S VISION

Erasmus was not a reformer. He was a scholar, and held the scholar's belief that the spread of learning would gradually do away with bigotry and intolerance, so that each man would be free to worship God in the way that seemed to him best. Yet it was Erasmus who described most clearly and fully the vision that was constantly before the eyes of the most ardent of the reformers. He said:

I totally dissent from those who are unwilling that the sacred Scriptures, translated into the vulgar tongue, should be read by private individuals. The mysteries of kings it were perhaps better to conceal, but Christ wishes His mysteries to be published as widely as possible. I would wish even all women to read the Gospel and St Paul's Epistles, and I wish they were translated into all languages of all people, that they might be read and known, not merely by the Scotch and Irish, but even by the Turks and Saracens. I wish that the husbandman would sing parts of them at his plough, that the weaver may warble them at his shuttle, that the traveller may with their narratives beguile the weariness of the way.

There was a Bible in the English language already in existence. It had been made by John Wiclif, who lived about the same time as Chaucer. Wiclif was a great scholar, and a devoted



parish priest. He preached and wrote vigorously against the greedy and unworthy monks and friars at whom Chaucer laughed in his *Canterbury Tales*, and he did his best to cleanse and reform the Church. His version of the Bible is written in vigorous, homely English, and for a hundred and fifty years it was the only version that the ordinary Englishman could read. But by the sixteenth century its language had become out of date, and readers had difficulty in understanding it; and for this and for other reasons it was felt that a new translation was required.

A great step toward turning this vision into reality was made when in 1517 Martin Luther, a poor German friar, nailed upon the door of the cathedral at Wittenberg a paper denouncing the action of the Pope in selling pardons and indulgences. From that time the struggle between the Church and the reformers grew year by year more intense. Henry VIII at first took the side of the Pope, and, consequently, in England the laws against heretics were more strictly enforced. There were still a small company of people in the country who held to the doctrines of Wiclif, and some who possessed a copy of the New Testament in English, which they read in secret; but no one had troubled very much about these people so long as they kept their religious opinions to themselves, although the penalties were rigorously enforced if a charge was brought against them. Now, however, the authorities, in their eagerness to stamp out the new Protestant heresy, were growing more watchful, and it was just at this time, when the dangers were increasing, that the vision of an English Bible, which everybody in the land might read, began to shine more brightly than ever before the eyes of the reformers.

One of the most enthusiastic of these was William Tyndale. He was a scholar who had studied both at Oxford and Cambridge, and was skilled in the Greek language and all the learning of the time. His heart was set on making a translation of the Bible. "If God spare my life," he said to a learned theologian who was one day arguing with him, "ere many



years I will cause the boy that driveth the plough to know more of the Scriptures than you do." When he left the university he settled down to work in his native county of Gloucestershire. But there were many hindrances there, and soon he felt that he could get on better if he came to London. He remembered that the Bishop of London was a friend to scholars, and had agreed with Erasmus that a new English translation of the Bible was wanted. So Tyndale wrote to him asking for a place in his household where he might work at his translation. But the Bishop was timorous; there was a strong feeling in the Church against the reformers; so he wrote saying "that his house was full, he had more than he could well find." Nevertheless, Tyndale came to London, and found a lodging for himself; but he met with much opposition, and at the end of a year he understood, he says, "not only that there was no room in my Lord of London's palace to translate the New Testament, but also that there was no place to do it in all England."

In May 1524 William Tyndale left England, to suffer, as he says, "poverty, exile, bitter absence from friends, hunger and thirst and cold, great dangers and innumerable other hard and sharp fightings." He settled at Hamburg, and went on steadily with his translation, using the original Greek version, not the Latin Vulgate used by Wiclif. Soon the Gospels and Epistles were ready for the printer, and Tyndale went to Cologne, where the printing was begun. He had a little company of friends with him, all helping in the great work, and although they went on quietly, and did their best not to attract any attention, some of the Catholics of the place found out what was going on, and obtained an order from the Senate of Cologne forbidding the printing of heretical works. Tyndale and his friends escaped to Worms, taking the precious sheets with them, and again the work went on, until at last, by the end of 1525, the New Testament was finished.

All this time the work of the Reformation had been making progress, and now there was in England a large number of



Protestants. Many copies of Tyndale's Testament were smuggled into the country and secretly distributed to eager readers. In 1526 the King was warned of what was being done, and orders were given that more care should be taken to prevent copies being brought in. Those who were caught in the attempt were cruelly punished. Anyone in whose possession the book was to be found was liable to be burnt at the stake. Yet still the Bibles came in, and still the people read them.

Not for a moment did Tyndale think of giving up his work. When the Testaments that had been seized were publicly burnt in St Paul's Churchyard he said: "In burning the New Testament they did none other thing than that I looked for: no more shall they do if they burn me also, if it be God's will it shall be so."

By 1530 six editions, making probably fifteen thousand copies, had been distributed. In the same year the translation of the Pentateuch—the first five books of the Bible—was printed. In 1531 Tyndale went to Antwerp and began the translation of the rest of the books of the Old Testament, and here he stayed until 1535. All this time his life was in constant danger. Henry VIII was trying to induce the governors of Antwerp to give him up, but Antwerp was a Protestant city and kept him in safety. He had many bitter private enemies, however, and one of these managed, by a trick, to bring him outside the city boundaries, where the authorities could not protect him. He was arrested, delivered up to the Emperor, and imprisoned in the castle of Vilvorde. His friends did all that could be done to help him, but it was of no use. He was charged with heresy, tried, condemned, and sentenced to death; and on October 6, 1536, the sentence was carried out.

Before Tyndale's death things had changed in England. Henry VIII had forsworn allegiance to the Pope, and the Protestant religion had been established in the country. In 1533 the thing for which Tyndale had hoped and worked came to pass. A decree was issued that the Bible should be published



in the native tongue. Miles Coverdale, a friend of Bishop Cranmer's, was employed to collect and revise the translations of Tyndale, and the Bible that he edited appeared in 1535, "Set forth with the Kynge's most gracious licence."

Early in the seventeenth century came another revision, which gave us the Authorized Version that we know so well. This is largely Tyndale's version, with some changes and corrections. It is not necessary here to give you any extracts from Tyndale's work. It is familiar to all of you. The reformers' vision, which seemed so far away in those early years, has become a reality.

### III. THE DRAMATIST'S VISION

The years between the publication of Tyndale's Bible and the accession of Elizabeth were years of strife and tumult. People in the England of Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Mary Tudor had little leisure either to write books or to read them. Bitter religious quarrels, self-seeking, strife, and fear filled the minds of men. Yet if we glance back at the Court of King Hal we shall see the beginnings of the poetical glory which made the reign of his daughter Elizabeth the greatest period in English literature; we shall see young men, their spirits kindled by the new learning, writing blank (or unrhyming) verse, sonnets in the Italian fashion, and songs which in grace and charm are almost equal to those of the Elizabethan singers. Among these young men was Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, whose long-legged figure in bright scarlet stockings many of us have seen at Hampton Court. Surrey was the cousin of Henry VIII's fifth Queen, Catherine Howard, and like her he died on the scaffold. It was a perilous time for poets who were proud and ambitious as well as being rich and noble, and among the victims of the King's suspicious rage none was more picturesque than this young Earl.

All the upspringing hope, the glad welcome to new ideas, the eager desire for fresh knowledge that had come with the Renaissance was, though not destroyed, held back and kept



inactive. Then Elizabeth came, and she soon made it clear that she would keep the peace with a strong hand, and would not allow Englishman to strive with Englishman any longer. She had a wonderful power of winning the trust and devotion of her people, and under her rule a sense of freedom and security spread over the land. The old ideals revived, and soon the great tide of energy, kept back for so long, was rushing forth once more. Religious differences were not forgotten. All through the reign of Elizabeth they were the subjects of the deepest and most passionate interest. But they were not allowed to become a matter of common strife, and Englishmen who held differing opinions learned to work side by side with one another for the great object of their country's good.

There followed busy years for England, years crowded with every sort of activity. The nation had energy and to spare for religion and poetry, for plays and for patriotism. There were men who were ready to sail gaily out on unknown seas, and men who were ready to help their royal mistress make England great at home. There were men who went blithely to fight the Spaniard or to dance in the revels at Whitehall. There were poets everywhere. All the young courtiers could write tuneful verses to fair ladies, and make songs, gay or mournful, about the birds or the flowers or anything else that seemed to them beautiful or interesting.

Nearly all the poets of this age were young. When Elizabeth came to the throne there were statesmen and soldiers and sailors and explorers ready to take up their work, but of the men who were to make her reign glorious in literature some were not born and the rest were tiny children. Spenser and Raleigh were six years old, Sidney and Lyly were four, Peele, Greene, Lodge, and Kyd were all born in the year of her accession, Shakespeare—greatest of all—and Marlowe were born six years later. A new generation had to grow up before the real Golden Age of literature began.

There was one group of these young men whom we always think of together and who are usually known by the name of



the University Wits. They came from various parts of England; a few of them had rich parents, some had poor ones; all had been educated at Oxford or Cambridge and were inclined, after the fashion of the day, to look down on those who had not. Chief among them were John Lyly, George Peele, Robert Greene, Thomas Nash, Christopher Marlowe, and Thomas Kyd. They were filled to the brim with the Renaissance spirit of daring curiosity. They were not scholars, though they were hungry for every kind of knowledge; they wanted new experiences and new delights, and they were reckless of the price they paid for them. Most of them were poor, and their poverty drove them to the poorer quarters of London, where they lived in foul streets, amid squalor and wretchedness. But nothing daunted the wild spirit within them. They revelled and rioted and feasted while any money remained, and when there was none they starved until their ready pens produced something—a pamphlet, a story, a poem, a ballad to be sung in the streets—that would bring them in a few shillings. But after a time they found another kind of writing that suited them better and brought in more money. They began to write plays for the theatre.

The drama in England had travelled far since the days of the miracle plays and the morals. More and more characters representing real people, not abstractions, had been introduced into the plays, until at length the abstractions had been dropped altogether. The idea that the play must teach some moral lesson had been given up, and plays had been written which were just ordinary stories, meant solely to give pleasure. These had become so popular that the actors had been obliged to find places more suitable than town-halls and open spaces in which to play them. First they had gone to the inn-yards, which were spacious enclosures with galleries built round them; and then theatres had been built specially for the acting of plays. The Elizabethans loved the play, and crowded to the theatre whenever a performance was to be given. It was a form of entertainment that suited the quick, lively



temper of the age. The day of the minstrel had gone by. The people now liked their stories acted, not told; they wanted something more real and living than the tales that had delighted their forefathers.

Up to the time that the University Wits began to write for the theatre no very notable plays had been produced. Many classical dramas had been translated and adapted and some English dramas, both tragedies and comedies, had been written. Some had been specially written for the Court, for Elizabeth loved plays as much as her people loved them. She loved splendour and pageantry and music, and the Court writers took care that there should be all these in the performances given before her.

The first of the University Wits to take to play-writing was John Lyly, and he wrote for the Court rather than for the people in general. His graceful, fanciful comedies were usually founded on some classical story. The characters were gods and goddesses who talked in the witty, refined, artificial fashion that had lately become the most admired way of speaking among the fine ladies and gentlemen of the day. There had been nothing like these plays of Lyly's for fine workmanship and finish, and for the charming songs introduced into them. The Court was delighted, and when the plays went, later, to the theatre, and were played to an audience of city merchants, tradespeople, students, craftsmen, lackeys, and apprentices, they seem to have been received favourably, though not perhaps with enthusiasm.

Next Thomas Kyd tried his fortune. In 1586 or thereabouts his play *The Spanish Tragedy* was acted. It is a tragedy indeed, full of murder and bloodshed, and horrors of every kind; its characters are vigorous and full-blooded men and women, moved to violent action by the passions of love and hate, envy and despair. If you and I went to see it we should probably find it horrible and revolting, or we might want to laugh at the exaggerated violence of the language and the action, but the audiences of that day were not squeamish, and its power



and passion thrilled them as no play they had seen before had been able to do. We do not think the play went to Court, but it was received with tremendous enthusiasm by crowded citizen audiences. So popular was it that other playwrights hurried to produce imitations, and the Tragedy of Blood, as this type of play was well called, was established.

Close upon Thomas Kyd came Christopher Marlowe. He was the finest spirit among this band of writers, wilder and more riotous than the others, but with a soaring genius that raised him far above them. He was only twenty-two at this time, and the visions that he saw were confused and indistinct. Strength and power and knowledge seemed to him the things most to be desired, and he saw in his dreams—though only dimly and uncertainly—the figure of a man who possessed them all, and used them to the full, so that he rode triumphantly above his fellow-men and trampled on them at his will. It was this vision that inspired his first play, *Tamburlaine the Great*, first acted in 1587 or 1588. Its full title is *Tamburlaine the Great, who from a Scythian Shepheard by his Rare and Wonderfull Conquests became a most Puissant and Mightye Monarque, and (for his Tyranny and Terroure in Warre) was tearmed the Scourge of God*. It was a story of overpowering ambition and ruthless conquest, and it was written in high and splendid verse that suited well with the theme. “Nature,” said Marlowe,

Doth teach us all to have aspiring mindes,  
Still climbing after knowledge infinite,  
And alwaies moving as the restlesse spheres.

In one scene a mighty king who had been taken prisoner was brought before his conqueror, shut up in an iron cage, and was taken out of it for a time only that Tamburlaine might use him for his footstool; and, at the end of the play, the all-victorious monarch, mad with triumph, drove round the stage in a chariot drawn by two kings, bitted and bridled, whom he slashed with his heavy whip, shouting scornfully, “Holla, ye pampered jades of Asia!”

It was a young man's play, crude and turbulent, and, as



many critics have said, full of rant and noise; but there was greatness in it and true poetry. It took the Elizabethan audiences by storm. Every man there had in him enough of the spirit of wild Kit Marlowe to see grandeur as well as horror in the triumphant, brutal Tamburlaine.

But the vision before Marlowe's eyes was growing clearer and more beautiful, and when he tried again to set it down the turbulence and the violence had almost gone. This time he chose the story of Dr Faustus as the foundation of his drama. The legend, which told of a man who sold his soul to the devil in return for certain privileges, was an old one, and had been told all over Europe throughout the Middle Ages. In the early part of the sixteenth century it had taken a more definite form, and was attached to a certain learned Dr Faustus, who had lived in Thuringia. This Dr Faustus was said to have sold his soul to the devil in exchange for twenty-four years of life, during which all knowledge and all pleasure should lie open before him, and all riches should be within his grasp. An attendant fiend was given to him who was to wait upon him and do his will in all things.

The legend seemed to fall in exactly with Marlowe's vision of a man all-knowing and all-powerful. The price that had to be paid at the end gave his play dramatic intensity and excitement; its hero aroused the keenest interest among the audience, for many of them had felt, in a lesser degree, the hunger and thirst after knowledge that had brought Faustus to destruction. Marlowe shows him as one of the great scholars of his time, who had learned all that the books of the Middle Ages could teach him, and had found his learning unsatisfying and vain. It could not help him to lead the large, full life that he longed for, and so he turned to magic. He determined that he would study the magician's art, for, he said, "A sound magician is a mighty god."

Shall I make spirits fetch me what I please,  
Resolve me of all ambiguities,  
Perform what desperate enterprise I will?



I'll have them fly to India for gold,  
Ransack the ocean for orient pearl,  
And search all corners of the new-found world  
For pleasant fruits and princely delicates;  
I'll have them read me strange philosophy,  
And tell the secrets of all foreign kings.

To gain all these pleasures he resolves to sell his soul to the devil; the bargain is made, and Faustus enters into the joys that he has dreamed of. The forces of nature obey him, he has riches at command, and the attendant fiend, Mephistophilis, is obedient to his will. He calls up the great poets of ancient Greece:

Have not I made blind Homer sing to me  
Of Alexander's love and Œnon's death?  
And hath not he that built the walls of Thebes  
With ravishing sound of his melodious harp  
Made music with my Mephistophilis?

He calls up Helen of Troy, for whose sake the war between the Greeks and the Trojans was fought, and exclaims:

Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships  
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?  
Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss!

At length the twenty-four years are nearly over, and Faustus must pay the price. He returns to his home at Wittenberg, and there awaits the coming of the fiends that are to carry off his soul to hell.

Ah, Faustus.

Now hast thou but one bare hour to live. . . .  
Stand still, you ever-moving spheres of heaven,  
That time may cease, and midnight never come;  
Fair Nature's eye, rise, rise again, and make  
Perpetual day; or let this hour be but  
A year, a month, a week, a natural day,  
That Faustus may repent and save his soul!

But all his prayers are of no use; the hour strikes, the Evil One appears; and in a terrible scene that brings the excitement to the highest pitch the play ends.

The effect of *Doctor Faustus* on the Elizabethan audiences was stupendous. Men trembled, we are told, as if the fiends on the



stage had really come from the lower world. Later, a legend grew up that the devil really had appeared while the play was being performed, "to the great amazement both of the actors and of the spectators."

In another play Marlowe turned to another subject, and wrote the history of the unfortunate Edward II, and this play is thought by some people to be equal to Shakespeare's *Richard III*. He wrote also *The Jew of Malta* and *Dido of Carthage*, but neither of these is as great as his other plays. His short poems are very lovely, and he left unfinished a long one about Hero and Leander. In 1593, when he was only twenty-nine years old, he died, killed by a wound from a dagger, received it is said in a drunken brawl in a Deptford tavern. So ended the life of the greatest of the Elizabethan dramatists except Shakespeare.

Of the other University Wits we must speak very briefly. They wrote comedies and tragedies and historical plays; they altered and adapted plays by earlier authors, and did all sorts of odd jobs that the managers of the theatres required, as Shakespeare, too, did in his turn. They were all great playwrights, though their fame has been overshadowed by that of Shakespeare and Marlowe; and they wrote also many poems and prose works that show how varied and active their genius was. When you are older you will study these; for the present we must leave them, and pass from the dramatists to the poets.

#### IV. THE POET'S VISION

While Christopher Marlowe was still a schoolboy two other poets who were to be as famous as he were seeing visions and dreaming dreams that were very different from his wild and splendid imaginings. Both these poets were older than Marlowe, though they were still in their twenties, and their best work did not appear until some years after he had won his great triumphs. The name of one was Edmund Spenser and of the other Philip Sidney. Spenser was the son of a London



merchant. He had gone from the Merchant Taylors' School to Cambridge, and had left there in 1576; and in 1578 he had entered the service of the Earl of Leicester. Sidney was the son of Sir Henry Sidney, Lord Deputy of Ireland, and nephew of my lord of Leicester. He had travelled on the Continent for three years after leaving Oxford, and since his return he had been the delight and ornament of Elizabeth's Court. There was no one so handsome, so accomplished, so noble and brave and courteous as young Philip Sidney. Everyone spoke well of him, and the small group of clever, ardent young men who were his special friends idolized him.

Edmund Spenser was one of these friends. Sidney, like other gentlemen of the Court, wrote from time to time sonnets and songs, and these were extravagantly praised; but he knew that the needy and obscure young man who served the great Earl was a better poet by far than he was. He gave, in his generous, warm-hearted fashion, all the help that he could to his poorer, more highly gifted friend. When Elizabeth could be persuaded to allow "the brightest jewel in her crown," as she called Sidney, to withdraw his shining presence from her Court, the two sometimes went together to Penshurst, the stately, beautiful home of the Sidney family. There, roaming the quiet woods, they talked of high poetic matters, and we may believe that each told the other something of the dream world that shone before his eyes. There was much that was alike in the two visions, for both loved beauty and virtue, both were adventurous and high-spirited, and burning to do great and noble deeds, and both hated what was mean, or false, or disloyal. Spenser had already written a long poem, and when he published it in 1580 he dedicated it to "The Noble and Vertuous Gentleman, worthy of all titles, both of Learning and Chevalrie, Mr Philip Sidney." He called it *The Shepheard's Calendar*, and though the far greater work that he did afterward has made us almost forget this earlier poem, it is really the finest that had been written since *The Canterbury Tales*.



The plan of the greater work was already in his mind when he talked with Sidney at Penshurst; perhaps some of it was written. But in the loyal days of Elizabeth the service of the country came before all private concerns—before poetry and before youthful ambition. In 1580 the Queen appointed Lord Grey de Wilton to succeed Sir Henry Sidney as Lord Deputy of Ireland, and Lord Grey chose Edmund Spenser as his secretary. In the autumn of that same year the young poet sailed with his new master for Ireland. The years that followed were full of fighting and bloodshed, of rebellions and massacres and all the horrors which at that time had to be met by the unfortunate Englishmen who helped to rule distracted Ireland. But even these things could not dim the bright vision that the poet saw, though they made a dark background for it; and, slowly, the great poem, *The Faerie Queene*, took shape.

Meantime, Philip Sidney too was exiled from the great Queen's Court. He had ventured to express an opinion which was displeasing to Elizabeth concerning her proposed marriage with the Duke of Alençon, and at once her smiles turned to frowns and she made it clear that he was under her high displeasure and must not appear in her presence. So Sidney, not unwillingly, withdrew from the Court, and went to Wilton, the home of his sister Mary, who was now Countess of Pembroke. The brother and sister had always been close companions, and the quiet months of this visit were full of delight for both of them. To please his sister, Philip began to write a prose story, which he called *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*.

It is written in prose, but it is the vision of a poet. In it Sidney tried to show to others his own ideal world—a fair and lovely place, kept peaceful by noble knights, who rode out on perilous adventures in the service of God and their ladies, and to help those who were in distress. They were simple and brave and loyal—knights and ladies alike; and there was no malice or envying or self-seeking among them such as lowered the high ideals of chivalry in the countries of the real world.

*Arcadia* tells the story of two princes, Musidorus and Pyrocles,



who are shipwrecked on the shores of a strange country, and find their way to a forest where live the King and Queen of Arcadia with their two daughters, Pamela and Philoclea. Musidorus disguises himself as a shepherd, and Pyrocles appears as a shepherdess, and there are many complications in a long love story, although in the end each prince wins the princess whom he has chosen.

Here is a description of Arcadia as the princes first saw it after a night spent in recovering from the effects of the shipwreck:

In the time that the morning did strow roses and violets in the heavenly floor against the coming of the sun, the nightingales, striving one with the other which could in most dainty variety recount their wrong-caused sorrow, made them put off their sleep; and rising from under a tree which that night had been their pavilion, they went on their journey, which by-and-by welcomed Musidorus' eyes with delightful prospects. There were hills which garnished their proud heights with stately trees; humble valleys whose base estate seemed comforted with the refreshing of silver rivers; meadows enamelled with all sorts of eye-pleasing flowers; thickets which, being lined with most pleasant shade, were witnessed so to by the cheerful disposition of many well-tuned birds; each pasture stored with sheep feeding with sober security, while the pretty lambs, with bleating oratory, craved the dam's comfort; here a shepherd's boy piping as though he should never be old; there a young shepherdess knitting and withal singing; and it seemed that her voice comforted her hands to work, and that her hands kept time with her voice's music. As for the houses of the country—for many houses came under their eye—they were all scattered, no two being one by the other, and yet not so far off as it barred mutual succour.

After a time Elizabeth's anger passed and Sidney came back to Court, and there he was met with some news that made him very unhappy. Penelope Devereux, the daughter of the Earl of Essex, had married Lord Rich, a wealthy nobleman much older than herself. Now, five years before, there had been an arrangement made between Sir Henry Sidney and the Earl of Essex concerning a marriage between Philip and Penelope. There had been no formal betrothal, but it had been understood in the two families that by and by the two



should marry. Philip had not been a very ardent lover; he was then only twenty-one years old and Penelope was thirteen, so perhaps he thought there was plenty of time before he need think of such things as betrothals. He had been more concerned with his friends and his poetry and his great schemes than with his lady. Now, when he heard that she was lost to him, he seems to have realized for the first time how much he loved her, and was overwhelmed with grief. He wrote a series of sonnets, known as the *Astrophel and Stella* sonnets, in which he bewailed his loss, and these are among his finest poems. He did not, however, sit down to indulge his grief and give up the work he had set himself to do. He went on quietly doing his duty and serving his country, and was as much a model of courtesy and gallant behaviour as he had been before. You all know the story of his wound at the battle of Zutphen in 1586 and of his brave, unselfish, beautiful act upon the battlefield when he bade those who tended him take to a wounded soldier the cup of water they had brought to ease his thirst. He was carried to Arnheim, and there, after twenty-five days of terrible suffering, he died.

When Sidney died Spenser had been in Ireland for nine years and *The Faerie Queene* was very nearly finished. When he had been sent to Ireland in 1580 it had seemed to him and to his friends that a great misfortune had fallen upon him, which would hinder him in writing his poem, and perhaps spoil it altogether. The change of scene had instead been probably the best thing that could have happened to him. In Ireland he found just the background he wanted—the forests “not perceable with power of any starr,” the “wilderness and wastful deserts,” against which his vision showed, shining and lovely. In 1586 Elizabeth gave him a grant of the manor and castle of Kilcolman, a ruined house that had belonged to the rebel Desmonds, and there he lived from that time forward. It stood in the midst of wild and very beautiful country. In front lay a small lake, and the Galtee Mountains rose behind, with Mt Arlo, “the best and fairest hill in all the holy island’s



heights," from which ran "soft rombling brooks," making their bright way over the rocks. It would have been, Spenser declared, "a most beautifull and sweet countrey as any is under heaven," if its peace had not been broken by terrors and alarms. But away to the north stretched a wild, desolate tract, half forest and half bog, which was the lurking-place of savage wolves, and desperate Irish rebels bent on driving out the English. In the midst of it was the great fastness where the Desmonds had taken refuge, and to which rebels from all parts of Ireland rallied. Their raids kept the country round in terror. Spenser must have had but an uneasy time of it at Castle Kilcolman.

He went on with his work steadily, however, giving to it much more serious and careful thought than Sidney had given to *Arcadia*. *Arcadia* had been a pastime, *The Faerie Queene* was a great life's work. Spenser was not content to tell his vision simply as a beautiful story. He wanted to teach by its means a high spiritual lesson, and he took pains to make that lesson clear. The purpose of the book, he decided, should be "to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline," and thinking how he could best do this he thought of the old British story of King Arthur, and on this he founded his poem. How he did it we shall see when we consider the first book of *The Faerie Queene*.

But even when he had planned how to give his poem a moral purpose he was not quite satisfied. Like all Englishmen of his day, he had a deep and loyal love for the great queen who had done so much for her country, and he wanted his poem to win glory for her, as well as for himself; and so he introduced into it yet another meaning. "In that Faerie Queene," he said,

I mean glory in my general intention, but in my particular I conceive the most excellent and glorious person of our sovaine the Queene and her Kingdome in Fairyland. . . . And yet in some places els, I doe otherwise shadow her. For considering she beareth two persons, the one of a most royall Queene or Empresse, the other of a most vertuous and beautifull Lady, the latter part in some places I doe expresse in Belphebe.



And so with other characters of the poem. They stand sometimes for several persons, as well as for a moral quality.

All this is very perplexing, and if we tried to remember it as we read, our enjoyment of *The Faerie Queene* would be spoilt. The best way is to forget all about it (as Spenser, it is clear, often did himself as he wrote) and think of the poem only as a beautiful story in which the poet shows us the lovely things he has seen himself.

In 1589 Spenser came back to England, bringing with him the first three books (out of the twelve he meant to write) of *The Faerie Queene*. Sir Walter Raleigh introduced him at the Court, and Elizabeth showed him great favour; and on December 1, 1589, the poem was published.

Spenser explained fully, in a letter to Raleigh, the general plan of the book. "I devise," he said,

that the Faerie Queene kept her Annual feaste xii dayes; uppon which xii severall dayes, the occasions of the xii severall adventures hapnd, which being undertaken by xii severall knights are in these xii books severally handled and discoursed. The first was this. In the beginning of the feast, there presented himselfe a tall clownishe younge man, who, falling before the Queene of Faeries, desired a boon (as the maner then was), which during that feast she might not refuse; which was that he might have the achievement of any adventure, which during that feast should happen: that being graunted he rested him on the floore, unfitte through his rusticity for a better place. Soon after entred a faire Lady in mourning weedes, riding on a white Asse, with a dwarfe behinde her leading a warlike steed that bore the Armes of a knight, and his speare in the dwarfe's hand. Shee, falling before the Queene of Faeries, complayned that her father and mother, an ancient King and Queene, had beene by an huge dragon many years shut up in a brasen Castle, who thence suffered them not to yssew, and therefore besought the Faery Queene to assygne her some one of her knights to take on him that exploit. Presently that clownishe person, upstarting, desired that adventure: whereat, the Queene much wondering and the Lady much gainsaying, yet he earnestly importuned his desire. In the end the Lady told him that unlesse the armour which she brought would serve him (that is the armour of a Christian man, specified by Saint Paul, Ephes. vi) that he could not succeed in that enterprise; which being forthwith put upon him, with dew furnitures thereunto, he seemed



the goodliest man in al that company, and was well liked of the lady. And eftsoones taking on him knighthood, and mounting on that straunge courser, he went forth with her on that adventure: where beginneth the first book, viz.:

A gentle knight was pricking on the plaine, etc.

This "tall clownishe younge man" is the Knight of Holiness, afterward St George, the patron saint of England. Often he is called the Red Cross Knight, because he wears on his breast and on his shield "a bloodie Crosse, the deare remembrance of his dying Lord." The lady is Una, or Truth. Spenser describes her as she rides out with the Red Cross Knight:

A lovely Ladie rode him faire beside,  
Upon a lowly asse, more white than snow,  
Yet she much whiter, but the same did hide  
Under a vele, that wimpled was full low,  
And over all a black stole shee did throw,  
As one that inly mourned: so was she sad,  
And heavie sat upon her palfrey slow:  
Seemed in heart some hidden care she had,  
And by her in a line a milk-white lamb she lad.

So pure and innocent as that same lambe,  
She was in life, and every vertuous lore.

They, with the Dwarf behind carrying Una's "bag of needments," rode on through a forest until they came to a hollow cave wherein was a horrible dragon, with a thousand young ones, and this foul creature the Red Cross Knight slew, cutting off her hateful head with one stroke of his sword. Then they went on again, and met an old, grey-bearded man, dressed in a long black robe, praying as he went and smiting his breast in penitence. "Sober he seemde, and very sagely sad"; and the Red Cross Knight judged him to be a holy man, and asked him if he knew of any adventures to be achieved in that land. But the old man answered that he spent his time praying in his cell and knew nothing of what went on in the world outside. Then as night was drawing on he asked them to come and rest at his house. "A little lowly hermitage it was," with a chapel near by, and there they discoursed on holy things with the hermit until it was time to go to rest. Then while



they were sleeping the old man, who was really a magician, went to his study and by his arts called to himself a legion of sprites, which fluttered about his head like little flies. Of these he chose two, and keeping one by him sent the other on a message to the house of Morpheus, the giver of dreams.

Whose double gates he findeth locked fast,  
The one faire fram'd of burnisht Yvory,  
The other all with silver overcast;  
And wakeful dogges before them farre doe lye,  
Watching to banish Care, their enemy,  
Who oft is wont to trouble gentle Sleep.

The sprite passed in quietly and came to Morpheus, and awoke him after some trouble, and Morpheus gave him the false dream for which his master had sent him. Then the sprite passed out by the ivory door (for that way come all false dreams, while true dreams pass by the door of silver) and returned. Meantime, his master had fashioned of the other sprite a lady who was in all her outward appearance like fair Una, and had taught her to play her part; and he bade his messenger take the false dream to the knight where he lay asleep.

In the morning the knight, beguiled by his dream, which had made him believe Una to be false, took his horse and the Dwarf and rode in grief and anger far from the hermitage. Poor Una, when she woke and found him gone, rode after him, but her slow ass could not overtake him.

Yet she her weary limbes would never rest,  
But every hil and dale, each wood and plaine,  
Did search, sore grieved in her gentle breast,  
He so ungently left her, whom she loved best.

The old man, Archimago, was rejoiced when he saw how his wicked plans had succeeded, and, planning to do still further mischief, he took on the form of the Red Cross Knight, and rode out after the two he had deceived. Meantime, the real knight had met a Saracen, with whom was "a goodly lady, clad in scarlet red," and had fought with him and overthrown him. Then the lady cried to him for mercy, telling him that she was Fidessa, the only daughter of an emperor, and was



to have married the son of a mighty king, but he was slain before her marriage day, and for years she had grieved for him. Then this proud Saracen had carried her off against her will, and she had suffered great misery. His name, she said, was Sans foy, and he had two brothers, Sans loy and Sans joy, all of them fierce and wicked and enemies to the true faith.

The Red Cross Knight believed her story, and vowed to protect and help her, and they went on their way together. At length, when they were weary, they sat down in the shade of two broad-spreading trees; and the knight, forgetting Una through the wiles of the lady he had rescued, began to praise her beauty, and to make a garland of leaves for her adornment. He plucked a small bough from the tree, and out of the rift came drops of blood, and a piteous voice cried on him to cease tearing the flesh shut up in the rough bark of the tree.

For a moment the Red Cross Knight could not speak for horror; then he called on whatever spirit it was who had spoken to say who he was and how he came there. "No spirit am I," said the voice, "but once a man, Fradubio, now a tree," and he went on to tell how a false sorceress, Duessa, had brought him to this sorrow. When he was a man, he said, he loved a fair lady, Fræliſsa, and riding with her one day he met a knight who had with him one who looked like a fair lady but was really Duessa, the sorceress. They fought, and the knight was overthrown, and Duessa joined herself to Fradubio and Fræliſsa, and by her false arts she made her own beauty shine so brightly, and made Fræliſsa look so foul and ugly, that Fradubio's love turned to hate, and he would have killed her had not Duessa turned her into a tree. Then Fradubio took Duessa for his lady, until on a certain day she was forced to take for a time her own form as a witch, unclean and horrible. Fradubio by chance saw her, and though when she came to him again as a bright lady he said no word of what he had seen, the witch knew that she was discovered, and by her arts she brought him back to where Fræliſsa stood, and changed him into a tree, to stand beside her.



“How long,” asked the Red Cross Knight, “must you stay in this plight?” and Fradubio answered, “Till we be bathed in a living well.” The Red Cross Knight would fain have helped him, but knew not what to do; and, turning, he saw his lady, who was really Duessa herself, in a deadly swoon, from fear of being discovered; but the knight, suspecting nothing, lifted her up and tended her lovingly. Then he set her on her steed and they went on their way.

We come back now to Una, who was still wandering in search of her knight.

One day, nigh weary of the irksome way,  
From her unhastie beast she did alight;  
And on the grasse her dainty limbs did lay  
In secret shadow, far from all mens sight:  
From her fair head her fillet she undight,  
And layd her stole aside. Her angels face,  
As the great eye of heaven, shyned bright,  
And made a sunshine in the shady place;  
Did never mortall eye behold such heavenly grace.

As she slept, a lion came out of the thicket ready to rush upon her, but as he drew near his fierce temper changed, and he “kist her wearie feet” and “lickt her lilly hands with fawning tong.” Henceforward he would not leave her, but went with her as a strong guard and saved her from many dangers, until one day they met one whom she thought was her own Red Cross Knight, but who was really the false Archimago. She greeted him with “faire fearfull humbleness,” begging him to tell her why he had left her so long, and he replied that Archimago had told him of a foul felon near by, and so he had left her that he might overthrow the misdoer.

His lovely words her seemed due recompense  
Of all her passed paines: one loving howre  
For many years of sorrow can dispence;  
A dram of sweete is worth a pound of sowre.

So they rode on until they met a Paynim knight, Sans loy, the brother of Sans foy. He, believing he saw the Red Cross Knight, rode at Archimago, vowing to avenge his brother's



death. They fought, and Sans loy triumphed, and was about to kill his adversary when Una cried for mercy. But Sans loy had no mercy, and roughly unlaced his foe's helmet; and then was seen the face of an old man. He knew Archimago, who was his friend, but he would not stay to succour him. He turned and seized Una, and when the lion rushed at him in her defence, with a stroke of his deadly spear he killed the lordly beast, and then he bore Una away in triumph.

Meantime, Duessa had taken the Red Cross Knight to the House of Pride, a stately palace whose lofty towers were covered with golden foil so that they glittered in the sun. Here he saw the proud queen Pride and her attendants, the Seven Deadly Sins, and here he found the third of the Paynim brothers, Sans joy, who challenged him to combat. The lists were prepared in which the two should fight before a great company:

At last the golden Orientall gate  
Of greatest heaven gan to open fayre;  
And Phœbus, fresh as brydegroome to his mate,  
Came dauncing forth, shaking his dewie hayre,  
And hurld his glistring beams through gloomy ayre.  
Which when the wakeful Elf perceiv'd, streight way,  
He started up, and did himselfe prepayre  
In sunbright arms and battailous array;  
For with that Pagan proud he combatt will that day.

After a fierce fight the Paynim was vanquished; and the Red Cross Knight had his sword raised to slay him, when a darksome cloud hid him from sight. Then Duessa praised the conqueror, but in her heart she grieved that the victory had not gone to Sans joy, and when night came she bore his body, by her arts, to Æsculapius, in Pluto's dark kingdom of Hell, there to be cured of his wounds. While she was gone the Dwarf came to the Red Cross Knight, who had been laid in bed after his wounds had been carefully tended, and told him of fearful things he had seen in the dungeons that were hidden under the stately House of Pride. There many captives who had once been mighty lords lived in misery, and their plight had so horrified the Dwarf that he begged his master to come



away at once from that wicked house. So he rose from his bed, and the Dwarf led him out by a secret gate, and they went again on their journey.

But Duessa, when she returned and found the knight gone, went after him at once, and found him lying disarmed by the side of a fountain.

Hee feedes upon the cooling shade, and bayes<sup>1</sup>  
His sweatie forehead in the breathing wynd,  
Which through the trembling leaves full gently playes,  
Wherein the cheareful birds of sundry kynd  
Doe chant sweet music to delight his mynd.

The knight received her gladly, and she sat down beside him, and he drank the water of the well, which had the magic power of making all who drank of it grow faint and feeble. Then, while he lay unarmed and powerless, there came a huge giant, who easily overthrew him, and brought him captive to his castle. The giant when he looked on Duessa loved her, and took her for his lady.

The Dwarf, when he saw his master fall, took up his armour and fled, and before long he met with Una, who was fleeing from the Paynim. When he told her what had happened she fell into a swoon. Then she rose up, determined to find the Red Cross Knight, and she and the Dwarf went on together.

At last when they had wandered a long way they met a knight with his squire, most glorious and wonderful to look at, and very strong and valiant, for this was the great Arthur himself. Soon Una had told him her sorrows and he had promised to help her, and together they came to the giant's castle; and although Duessa tried all her magic arts, the might of Arthur could not be gainsaid. The giant was killed and Duessa taken captive, and the Red Cross Knight, after a long search, was discovered in his terrible underground prison, very weak and suffering. They stripped Duessa of her scarlet robe, and at once her beauty vanished and she was shown as a witch, foul and ugly, and she fled from them into the wilderness. For a time they stayed in the castle to

<sup>1</sup> bathes.



rest themselves and allow the Red Cross Knight to recover; then Arthur left them, and after some more adventures Una led her knight to the House of Holiness. There lived Dame Cælia, with her three daughters Fidelia, Speranza, and Charissa (Faith, Hope, and Charity), and there the knight stayed until all his strength had come back to him. At an hermitage near by lived a holy man, who led the knight to the top of a hill from which he could look down on the new Jerusalem,

Whose wals and towres were builded high and strong  
Of perle and precious stone, that earthly tong  
Cannot describe, nor wit of man can tell;  
Too high a ditty for my simple song.  
The Citty of the greate king hight it well,  
Wherein eternall peace and happiness doth dwell.

When he was entirely restored he took leave of Cælia, and, with Una, went on his way. They were now near the castle where the dragon held her father and mother imprisoned, and the great adventure on which they had set out was about to be fulfilled. Soon they came within sight of the dragon,

Where stretcht he lay upon the sunny side  
Of a great hill, himself like a great hill.

Blithely the knight prepared for battle, and for two days they fought, and at last the dragon fell.

So downe he fell, and forth his life did breath,  
That vanisht into smoke and cloudes swift;  
So downe he fell, that th' earth him underneath  
Did groan, as feeble so great load to lift;  
So downe he fell, as an huge rocky clift,  
Whose false foundation waves have washt away,  
With dreadfull poyse is from the mayneland rift,  
And rolling downe great Neptune doth dismay:  
So downe he fell, and like an heaped mountain lay.

Then the old King and Queen came out and welcomed their deliverer, and there were great rejoicings, and a great feast was made, at which the knight and Una were betrothed—fair Una, who came forth

As bright as doth the morning starre appeare  
Out of the East, with flaming lockes bedight,



To tell that dawning day is drawing neare,  
And to the world does bring long-wished light;  
So faire and fresh that Lady showed herself in sight.

So faire and fresh as freshest flowrs in May;  
For she had layd her mournful stole aside,  
And widow-like sad wimple throwne away,  
Wherewith her heavenlie beautie she did hide,  
Whiles on her wearie journey she did ride;  
And on her now a garment she did weare  
All lilly white, withoutten spot or pride,  
That seemed like silke and silver woven neare:  
But neither silke nor silver therein did appeare.

Then came the wedding, with mirth and music and high  
rejoicing:

Thrise happy man the knight himselfe did hold,  
Possessed of his Lady's heart and hand;  
And ever, when his eie did her behold,  
His heart did seeme to melt in pleasures manifold.

Her joyous presence and sweet company,  
In full content he there did long enjoy;  
Ne wicked envy, ne vile gealosy,  
His deare delights were hable to annoy:  
Yet, swimming in that sea of blissfull joy,  
He nought forgott how he whilome had sworne,  
In case he could that monstrous beast destroy,  
Unto his Faerie Queene backe to retourne;  
The which he shortly did, and Una left to mourne.

There the first book ends. It is impossible in a summary such as this to make you feel how beautiful the poem is, or to show you the pure loveliness of Una's radiant figure as she passes from one dark scene to another, and, as Spenser says, makes a sunshine in a shady place. You must read *The Faerie Queene* for yourselves if you would understand its magic.

The second book tells of the adventures of Sir Guyon, the Knight of Temperance, the third of those of Britomart, the maiden Knight of Chastity.

For about two years after the publication of *The Faerie Queene* Spenser remained in England, enjoying the fame his work had brought him. In 1592 he went back to Ireland, and in 1594 he married. We know nothing about his wife



except that her name was Elizabeth, but the glorious marriage hymn, *Epithalamium*, that her husband wrote in her honour raises her in our imaginations to a place beside the radiant figures of Una and Britomart. At Kilcolman, lonely no longer, Spenser during the following year finished the next three books of *The Faerie Queene*, of which the heroes are the Knight of Friendship, the Knight of Justice, and the Knight of Courtesy. He came to England to see about the publication of these books, but he soon returned. Children were born to him, he had leisure for the work in which he delighted, his home was lovely and peaceful. But in the Ireland of that day peace seldom lasted for very long. In 1598 a new rebellion broke out, and Kilcolman was sacked and burnt. Spenser and his wife, broken-hearted, returned to England, and a few months later, on January 16, 1599, he died. He was buried with all honour in Westminster Abbey, near the grave of that other great London poet, Geoffrey Chaucer.



---

## *Chapter XVI*

### THE SONGS OF THE ELIZABETHANS

**B**y the time Elizabeth came to the throne the Merrie England of the Middle Ages had passed, and Tudor England had taken its place. The new England was as merry as the old, and in some ways not very different from it. The Elizabethans loved songs even more than their grandfathers had done, and they made them in far greater numbers. They did not make them in the same way, for the time when songs grew up gradually among the people and were the work of many hands had almost passed. It was the poets now who made the songs, and there were poets all over the land, writing verses, shaping them finely, altering and polishing them and sending them out, finished and perfect, to make sweet music in the ears of the people. There has been no age in all our history when England has sung as freely and as tunefully as she sang during the reign of Elizabeth. Not only the professional poets, but gentlemen of every degree, made songs, and everyone, from the king to the beggar, sang them.

Very little care was taken to preserve these songs. They were written in some joyous or perhaps in some melancholy mood, handed about among the friends of the writer, and then lost or forgotten. Sometimes, if they were specially admired, they were set to music, and copied into some of the song-books that nearly everyone kept in those days. Hundreds of them must have been altogether lost—perhaps some that were as lovely as those that remain to delight us.

After a time people began to notice and deplore the carelessness through which so many treasures were being wasted. Enterprising publishers collected as many as they could find and printed them—sometimes with the author's permission and sometimes without it. These were published in small



volumes, which were called "miscellanies." The first miscellany, called *Tottel's Miscellany*, was published by Richard Tottel in the year before Elizabeth came to the throne. The greater number of the poems it contained were by Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, but there were also some by less-known poets, and some by poets whose names were not given.

This first miscellany was very popular, and other publishers were encouraged to follow Richard Tottel's example. All through Elizabeth's reign these miscellanies were appearing every few years. Their names alone were enough to make readers anxious to buy them. There was *The Paradyse of Daynty Devises* (1576), *A Gorgious Gallery of Gallant Inventions* (1578), *A Handfull of Pleasant Delites* (1584), Breton's *Bower of Delites* (1592), *The Phœnix Nest* (1593), *The Arbour of Amorous Devises* (1597), *The Passionate Pilgrim* (1599), and *England's Helicon* (1600). Besides the miscellanies there were song-books, which were collections made by one or other of the famous musicians of the time: Thomas Campion, William Byrd, Henry Dowland, and others; and in these the air was given as well as the words.

Some of the poems in these books are not much more than pretty rhymes, a few are mere jingles; but most are true songs, fresh and tuneful, and many of these are lovely lyrics that have taken their places in the great poetry of England.

Wherever we dip into these books we are sure to find "pleasant delites." There are love songs in plenty. There is Thomas Lodge's plaint, *To Phyllis, the Fair Shepherdess*:

My Phyllis hath the morning Sun,  
At first to look upon her;  
And Phyllis hath morn-waking birds,  
Her rising still to honour.  
My Phyllis hath prime-feathered flowers,  
That smile when she treads on them;  
And Phyllis hath a gallant flock,  
That leaps since she doth own them.  
But Phyllis hath too hard a heart,  
Alas, that she should have it!



## THE SONGS OF THE ELIZABETHANS

---

It yields no mercy to desert,  
Nor grace to those that crave it.  
Sweet Sun, when thou look'st on,  
Pray her regard my moan!  
Sweet birds, when you sing to her,  
To yield some pity, woo her!  
Sweet flowers, that she treads on,  
Tell her her beauty deads one:  
And if in life her love she nil agree me,  
Pray her before I die, she will come see me.

The songs are written in all sorts of metres. There is John Wootton's madrigal beginning:

Tune on my pipes the praises of my love,  
Love fair and bright;  
Fill earth with sound, and airy heavens above,  
Heaven's Jove's delight  
With Daphnis' praise.

There is Robert Greene's

Some say Love,  
Foolish Love,  
Doth rule and govern all the Gods.  
I say Love,  
Inconstant Love,  
Sets men's senses far at odds.

When we are tired of love ditties there are blithe country songs.

In midst of woods or pleasant grove,  
Where all sweet birds do sing,  
Methought I heard so rare a sound  
Which made the heavens to ring,

sang John Mundy; and Thomas Campion sang:

Jack and Joan, they think no ill,  
But loving live, and merry still;  
Do their weekday's work and pray  
Devoutly on the holy-day:  
Skip and trip it on the green,  
And help to choose the Summer Queen:  
Lash out at a country feast  
Their silver penny with the best.

For a serious mood there could be nothing better than the beautiful anonymous lyric *Yet if His Majesty, our Sovereign Lord.*



## THE GOLDEN ROAD IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

---

Yet if his Majesty, our sovereign lord,  
Should of his own accord  
Friendly himself invite,  
And say, "I'll be your guest to-morrow night,"  
How should we stir ourselves, call and command  
All hands to work! "Let no man idle stand.

"Set me fine Spanish tables in the hall,  
See they be fitted all;  
Let there be room to eat,  
And order taken that there want no meat.  
See every scone and candlestick made bright  
That without tapers they may give a light.

"Look to the presence; are the carpets spread,  
The dazie o'er the head,  
The cushions on the chairs,  
And all the candles lighted on the stairs?  
Perfume the chambers, and in any case  
Let each man give attendance in his place."

Thus if the king were coming would we do,  
And 'twere good reason too;  
For 'tis a duteous thing  
To show all honour to an earthly king,  
And after all our travail and our cost,  
So he be pleased, to think no labour lost.

But at the coming of the King of Heaven  
All's set at six and seven:  
We wallow in our sin,  
Christ cannot find a chamber in the inn,  
We entertain Him always like a stranger,  
And, as at first, still lodge Him in a manger.

Even more delightful songs than those contained in these books of verse are to be found scattered through the plays and romances of the time. We all know Shakespeare's beautiful lyrics—*Hark! hark! the Lark, Fear no more the Heat o' the Sun, Orpheus with his Lute, Ye Spotted Snakes*, and many others. John Lyly set the fashion of bringing songs into his plays at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, and it was followed by nearly every other dramatist of the time. *Cupid and my Campaspe* is one of the daintiest of Lyly's lyrics:

Cupid and my Campaspe played  
At cards for kisses—Cupid paid.



## THE SONGS OF THE ELIZABETHANS

---

He stakes his quiver, bow, and arrows;  
His mother's doves and team of sparrows:  
Loses them too; then down he throws  
The coral of his lip, the rose  
Growing on 's cheek (but none knows how);  
With these the crystal of his brow,  
And then the dimple of his chin—  
All these did my Campaspe win.  
At last he set her both his eyes—  
She won, and Cupid blind did rise.

The University Wits, for all their riotous lives, could write lyrics as fresh and sweet as any country poet's. George Peele has one that begins:

Fair and fair, and twice so fair,  
As fair as any may be,  
The fairest shepherd on our green,  
A love for any lady.

Robert Greene's songs are specially beautiful. Here is one:

Sweet are the thoughts that savour of content;  
The quiet mind is richer than a crown;  
Sweet are the nights in careless slumber spent;  
The poor estate scorns fortune's angry frown:  
Such sweet content, such minds, such sleep, such bliss,  
Beggars enjoy, when princes oft do miss.  
  
The homely house that harbours quiet rest;  
The cottage that affords nor pride nor care;  
The mean that 'grees with country music best;  
The sweet consort of mirth and music's fare;  
Obscured life sets down a type of bliss:  
A mind content both crown and kingdom is.

We will finish with one of the shortest, but one of the most beautiful of the lyrics of Shakespeare:

Hark! hark! the lark at heaven's gate sings,  
And Phoebus 'gins arise,  
His steeds to water at those springs  
In chalic'd flowers that lies;  
And winking Mary-buds begin  
To ope their golden eyes;  
With everything that pretty is,  
My lady sweet, arise:  
Arise, arise!



---

## Chapter XVII

### THE SEA-DOGS AND THEIR STORIES

**W**HILE the poets were writing the sea-dogs were sailing the high seas, and winning glory for England in all parts of the world. It was nearly a hundred years since Columbus had set out on that great voyage which had opened to us a new world, and his example and the "great fame and report" that he gained made others feel "a great flame of desire to attempt some notable thing." So said Sebastian Cabot, a Venetian merchant, who in 1497 sailed from Bristol and discovered the coast of Labrador; and after him came many others, Portuguese and Spaniards and Italians, and, last of all, English. The English age of exploration did not begin until half-way through the century; but though they came late, they did not long lag behind. Hugh Willoughby, Richard Chancellor, John Hawkins, Humphrey Gilbert, Walter Raleigh, Francis Drake, Martin Frobisher, John Davys—these are all great names among sixteenth-century explorers.

They sailed out in their little ships into unknown seas, and of their adventures and their achievements there was no end. They fought the proud Spanish galleons, and brought home their treasures as a gift to the great Queen. They took possession of new lands in the name of Elizabeth; they found out a pathway through the ice and snow of the northern seas; and, to their shame it must be said, some of them carried cargoes of negroes from Africa to be sold as slaves in foreign lands. There were storms and shipwrecks and mutinies; there were nights and days of torture from fierce hunger and burning thirst; there were wild beasts to be met, and wild men, and strange, uncanny terrors that these seamen feared much more than they feared visible foes.



When they came home again their tales of the adventures they had met might have provided the material for a hundred poems which their countrymen, who gloried, as Englishmen always have gloried, in the prowess of their nation on the wide seas, would have read with rapture. Every port was full of these brave tales, and from the ports they spread inland, and were told in the taverns and the markets and the workshops, and all over the countryside. But for a long time there were few written records of these voyages. Captains kept their logs, and sometimes when they came home published an account of their voyages compiled from these. John Hawkins wrote *A True Declaration of the Troublesome Voyage of Mr John Hawkins to the Parts of Guinea and the West Indies in the Years of our Lord 1567 and 1568*, and in 1570 Sir Humphrey Gilbert wrote his *Discourse of a Discoverie for a New Passage to Cataia*. Frobisher and Richard Hawkins also published some account of their voyages. All these the people read eagerly, and they were ready to read much more.

It seems strange when we think of the number of men who were at this time writing poetry in England that nobody seized upon one of these heroic stories and turned it into a great epic. To write a lyric was in those golden days the ordinary accomplishment of a gentleman; to write a play came in the day's work of many a clever, needy young man scribbling hard for a living. But the buoyant, restless spirit of Elizabethan times seems to have been unfavourable to the writing of epic poetry. Perhaps the strength of the poets' imaginations made it difficult for them to write a narrative of fact; perhaps there were so many heroes they did not know which to choose. The literature of the day has many references to these adventurers; it shows how the nation gloried in its heroes of the sea; but for a full story of all that they did Englishmen had to wait for the prose narrative of Richard Hakluyt.

Richard Hakluyt was not a sailor, and his home was in the inland county of Herefordshire. He came of a scholarly family,



and, as his parents wished, he became a clergyman of the English Church. As far as we know he never travelled beyond Paris. Yet he will always be associated in men's minds with great deeds done upon the high seas and wonderful adventures in distant lands. Those were the things that interested him most, and he spent all his life studying them. "I do remember," he says,

that being a youth, and one of Her Majesty's scholars at Westminster, that fruitful nurserie, it was my hap to visit the chamber of Mr Richard Hakluyt, my Cosin, a Gentleman of the Middle Temple, at a time when I found lying open upon his boord certeine books of Cosmographie, with an Universalle Mappe. He seeing me somewhat curious in the view thereof began to instruct my ignorance by showing me the division of the earthe into three partes, after the olde account, and then, according to the latter and better distribution, more; he pointed his wand to all the knowen Seas, Gulfs, Bayes, Straights, Capes, Rivers, Empires, Kingdoms, Dukedoms, and Territories of ech part, with declaration also of their special commodities and particular wants, which by the benefit of traffike and entercourse of merchants are plentifully supplied. From the map he brought me to the Bible, and turning to the 107th Psalm directed me to the 23rd and 24th verses, where I read that "they that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep," which words of the Prophet, together with my cousin's discourse (things of high and rare delight to my young nature), tooke in me so deepe an impression, that I constantly resolved, if ever I were preferred to the University, where better time and more convenient place might be ministered for these studies, I would by God's assistance prosecute that knowledge and kind of literature the doores whereof (after a sort) were so happily opened before me.

When he went from Westminster School to Christ Church, Oxford, he began at once the study on which his heart was set. He learned six languages that he might be able to read all the accounts of different voyages that he could obtain. He studied geography as far as it was then known; more especially he paid attention to the construction of maps. He learned the art of navigation, with the use of the navigator's instruments. When he left the university he lectured on these subjects, probably to merchants and shipmen of the Port of



London, "to the singular pleasure and general contentment of his audience."

By this time he had begun to collect the scattered narratives of the earlier voyagers, and to make out of them a clear and continuous story. Of some of the voyages there was no written account, so Hakluyt set to work to collect all the facts concerning them that he could gather from Government documents, letters, references in the literature of the day, the common talk of the people, the recollections of old sailors. Once he rode two hundred miles that he might talk with the only man left of those who had taken part in Master Hoare's expedition to America in 1536. "What restless nights, what painful days, what heat, what cold I have endured," he says,

how many long and chargeable journeys I have travelled; how many famous libraries I have searched into; what variety of ancient and modern writers I have perused; what a number of old records, patents, privileges, letters, etc., I have redeemed from obscurity and perishing; into how manifold acquaintance I have entered; what expenses I have not spared!

In 1589 Hakluyt published his great work, *The Principall Navigations, Voiages, and Discoveries of the English Nation, made by Sea or over Land to the most Remote and Farthest Distant Quarters of the Earth at any Time within the Compasse of these Fifteen Hundred Yeares*. It is a work of many volumes, and each volume is full of wonderful stories telling about the great deeds of gallant English seamen.

There is the story of how Sir Francis Drake "singd the King of Spain's beard" by burning some Spanish ships in Cadiz harbour, or, as it is called in Hakluyt's book, "A Brief Relation of the Notable Service performed by Sir Francis Drake upon the Spanish Fleete prepared in the Road of Cadiz." "Her Majestie," this story begins,

being informed of a mightie preparation by Sea begunne in Spain for the invasion of England, by good advise of her grave and prudent Counsell, thought it expedient to prevent the same. Whereupon she caused a fleet of some thirty sails to be rigged and furnished with all things necessary. Over this fleet she appointed



## THE GOLDEN ROAD IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

---

Generall Sir Francis Drake, of whose manifold former good services she had sufficient prooffe.

The thirty ships sailed away, and on April 19th entered the harbour of Cadiz, "where at our first entring," says the narrator, "we were assailed over against the Town by sixe Gallies, which notwithstanding in short time retired under their fortresse." They sunk some of the ships and took others; and "to conclude, the whole number of ships and barkes (as we suppose) then burnt, suncke, and brought away with us, amounted to thirty at the least."

The narrator goes on:

We found little ease during our abroad there by reason of their continuall shooting from the Gallies, the fortresses and from the shoare; where continually at places convenient they planted new ordinance to offend us with: besides the inconvenience which wee suffered from their ships, which, when they could defend no longer, they set on fire to come among us. Whereupon when the flood came wee were not a little troubled to defend us from their terrible fire, which neverthelesse was a pleasant sight for us to beholde, because we were thereby eased of a great labour, which lay upon us day and night, in discharging the victuals and other provisions of the enemye. Thus by the assistance of the almighty and the invincible courage and industrie of our Generall, this strange and happy enterprize was atchieved, in one day and two nights, to the great astonishment of the King of Spaine, which bread such a corrosive in the heart of the Marques of Santa Cruz, high Admiral of Spaine, that he never enjoyed good day after, but within few moneths (as may justly be supposed) died of extreame griefe and sorrow.

The story of Sir Richard Grenville's gallant fight in his little *Revenge* is headed: "A Report of the Trueth of the Fight about the Iles of Açores, the last of August 1591, betwixt the *Revenge*, one of her Majesties Shippes, and an Armada of the King of Spaine; penned by the Honourable Sir Walter Raleigh, Knight." It tells how the *Revenge*, having been by necessity left behind the rest of the English ships, must face the whole of the Spanish Fleet, or fly; and how Sir Richard "utterly refused to turn from the enemye, alleaging that hee would rather choose to die, then to dishonour himselfe, his countrey,



and her Majesties shippe "; and how he fought a great fight for fifteen hours.

All the powder of the *Revenge* to the last barrell was now spent, all her pikes broken, fortie of her best men slaine, and the most part of the rest hurt. In the beginning of the fight shee had but one hundredth free from sickness, and fourescore and ten sick, laid in hold upon the Ballast. A small troupe to man such a ship, and a weake garrison to resist so mighty an army. By those hundred al was sustained, the volleys, boardings and entries of fifteene ships of war, besides those which beat her at large. On the contrary, the Spanish were always supplied with souldiers brought from every squadron: all manner of Armes and powder at will. Unto ours there remained no comfort at all, no hope, no supply either of ships, men, or weapons; the Mastes all beaten over board, all her tackle cut asunder, her upper worke altogether rased, and in effect evened she was with the water, but the very foundation or bottom of a ship, nothing being left overhead either for flight or defence. Sir Richard, finding himselfe in this distresse, and unable any longer to make resistance, having endured in this fifteene houres fight the assault of fifteene severall Armadas, all by turns aboard him, and by estimation eight hundred shot of great Artillerie besides many assaults and entries; and that himselfe and the shippe must needes be possessed by the enemie, who were now all cast in a ring round about him (the *Revenge* not able to move one way or the other but as she was moved by the waves and billow of the sea) commanded the Master gunner, whom he knew to be a most resolute man, to split and sinke the shippe; that thereby nothing might remain of glory or victory to the Spaniards; seeing in so many houres fight, and with so great a Navie, they were not able to take her, having had fifteene houres time, above ten thousand men, and fiftie and three saile of men of war to performe it withall; and persuaded the company, or as many as he could induce, to yeelde themselves unto God and to the mercie of none else: but as they had, like valiant resolute men, repulsed so many enemies, they should not now shorten the honour of their Nation by prolonging their owne lives for a fewe houres or a fewe dayes. The Master gunner readily condescended<sup>1</sup> and divers others; but the Captain and the Master were of another opinion and besought Sir Richard to have care of them: alleaging that the Spaniard would be as ready to entertaine a composition as they were willing to offer the same: and that there being divers sufficient and valiant men yet living, and whose wounds were not mortal, they might do their Country and prince acceptable service hereafter.

<sup>1</sup> consented.



The Spaniards were themselves eager to make terms, partly through admiration of a gallant enemy, partly because they were loath to enter again on what remained of the *Revenge*. Sir Richard and the Master gunner stood firm, but all the rest agreed to the terms, and "the Master gunner finding himselfe and Sir Richard thus prevented and mastered by the greater number, would have slaine himselfe with a sword, had he not bene by force with-held and locked into his Cabben." So the gallant little *Revenge* surrendered, and Sir Richard, sorely wounded, was carried on board the great Spanish vessel *Generall*; and there, two or three days later, he died.

There are many others of whom Hakluyt tells us who adventured and fought and suffered as bravely as did Drake and Grenville. There is Sebastian Cabot, "a very gentle person," who laid down wise laws for his "companie of Marchants Adventurers," directing that all the crew should be

so knit and accorded in unitie, love, conformitie, and obedience in everie degree on all sides, that no dissention, variance or contention may rise or spring betwixt them and the mariners of this companie to the damage or hindrance of the voyage.

There is Martin Frobisher, so bent upon his great enterprise of discovering the North-west Passage to India that

he determined and resolved with himself to go make full proof thereof, and to accomplish or bring full certificate of the truth, or else never to return again; knowing this to be the only thing of the world that was left yet undone, whereby a notable mind might be made famous and fortunate.

There is Sir Richard Hawkins, who sailed in his ship *Repentance*, which his mother had named, because she said "repentance was the safest ship we could sail in to purchase the haven of heaven." There is Francis Drake again, "full of invincible courage and industry," climbing a tree in Panama, so that he could look down on two oceans, and praying God that he might sail a ship into the unknown Pacific; crawling out upon the cliffs of Tierra del Fuego, and leaning his head over the southernmost angle of the world; "scoring a furrow round



the globe with his keel ”; and receiving the homage of the barbarians of the Antipodes in the name of the Virgin Mary. There is Sir Humphrey Gilbert, who went down in his little ship the *Squirrel*, dying in a fashion “ well beseeeming a soldier resolute in Jesus Christ,” and whose great words, written in his *Discourse*, sum up the grand and simple creed by which these brave mariners directed their lives:

If through pleasure or idleness we purchase shame, the pleasure vanisheth, but the shame abideth for ever. Give me leave, therefore, without offence, always to live and die in this mind: that he is not worthy to live at all that, for fear or danger of death, shunneth his country's service and his own honour, seeing that death is inevitable and the fame of virtue immortal.



---

## *Chapter XVIII*

### SHAKESPEARE

#### I. EARLY PLAYS

SOME time during the year 1586 a young man about twenty-two years old started from his native town of Stratford-on-Avon to seek his fortune in London. He came hopefully, but not very happily, for he was almost penniless, and he had left behind him a wife, a little three-year-old daughter, and twin babies of little more than a year. He had been educated at the Stratford Grammar School, but he had no trade or profession, and his father, John Shakespeare, who had once been a prosperous tradesman in the town, had lost most of his money and could give his son no help. The young man had fallen into idle ways and had wasted his time with worthless companions, and it is said that there had been trouble about a poaching expedition in which he had joined. But he had given all that up, and now, heartily ashamed of himself, as we may suppose, he had resolved to make a fresh start. It was difficult to do this in Stratford, where his wild ways were remembered, and no one would be very willing to employ him. So he set out for the great city of London, just as Dick Whittington had set out for it two centuries before; only William Shakespeare's aim was not to become Lord Mayor, but to go back to Stratford as a rich and famous man, and put his family back into the position they had held when he was a boy, or into an even higher one.

He came on foot by way of Oxford and High Wycombe, trudging steadily and faring poorly, and when he got to London the struggle to gain a living began. From the first he seems to have made up his mind that his work should have something to do with the theatre. He had seen plays acted at



Stratford. We know that companies of actors visited the town for the first time during the year 1568, and were received by John Shakespeare, who then held the high office of bailiff. It is very likely, also, that when Queen Elizabeth made her royal progress through Worcestershire in 1576, and visited the Earl of Leicester at his castle of Kenilworth, William Shakespeare and his father went with other Stratford citizens to see the plays and revels held in her honour. Kenilworth was only fifteen miles from Stratford, and the occasion was a great one. Perhaps the boy had felt as he watched breathlessly while the actors took their turn on the stage and told their story that here was something he could do and be happy in doing; and perhaps that was why, when he came to London, he turned to the theatre.

There were two playhouses in London at this time, the Theatre, in Shoreditch, and the Curtain, near by, in Moorfields. When Shakespeare first saw them, Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* was being played at the Theatre, and a little later came Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*. Very likely the country youth saw glimpses of both of these plays as he hung about the doors waiting for a job; it is said that he used to hold the horses of the gentlemen who came to see the play, and for some time earned a poor living in that way. But he persevered in his efforts, and presently, we are told, "he was received into the company then in being, at first in a very mean rank." Then, working hard and doing his best, and being ready to turn his hand to anything that was asked of him, William Shakespeare began to make a slow, laborious way toward the fame and fortune he had come to London to find.

He kept his eyes and his ears open and soon found out the sort of play the public liked. He heard everybody praising *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Tamburlaine* and the other tempestuous plays, full of riot and bloodshed, that were being produced, in imitation of them. He may have taken part in some of these plays, for he was quickly making a name as an actor, and soon the company to which he belonged thought so well of him



that he was given the task of touching up old or unsatisfactory plays, and making them fit to put on the stage. He did this so well that more and more of this work was given to him. As he grew more certain of his skill he altered and cut and added to the plays more and more freely, until by and by he was sending them out with only a small part of the original work remaining. From that he passed easily to writing plays that were entirely his own.

One of the early plays, of which only a small part was written by Shakespeare, is *Titus Andronicus*. It is usually printed with his works, but it is the one we least like to read. It is as violent and full of blood and horror as *The Spanish Tragedy* itself, and only here and there can we find beautiful touches that tell us Shakespeare has been at work.

But when Shakespeare left the plays of other people and began to write for himself we get something that is very different. And that time was not long in coming. Less than four years after he had arrived, poor and friendless, in London, he produced his first comedy, *Love's Labour's Lost*; and for the next twenty years he wrote steadily, and produced more than thirty plays, which are the great glory of our literature. I am not going to try to tell you about all these plays, nor even to tell you their names. We will just look at two or three of them and let those stand for the rest.

You must remember that when Shakespeare wrote his early comedies he was still a young man, still new to the stirring, vivid life of London, and still poor, though his fortunes were mending every day. He could still only afford a lodging in one of the poorer parts of London, and in the reign of Elizabeth those parts were squalid and dirty enough. He must often have thought longingly of his pleasant home at Stratford, and of the country where he had roamed in spring-time,

When daisies pied and violets blue  
And lady-smocks all silver-white  
And cuckoo-buds of yellow hue  
Do paint the meadows with delight.



Yet he could not help catching something of the gay, triumphant spirit that moved the great city in which he lived, especially after the defeat of the Armada in 1588; hope was high within him, for he saw himself advancing steadily toward the end he had set himself to reach; and though the struggle was hard it was worth while. He acted, and wrote his plays, and did such other business of the theatre as fell to him. In the summer and early autumn most of the theatrical companies went on tour, and Lord Leicester's company, to which Shakespeare belonged, went with the rest, and visited most of the towns of any size in the south and the west of England. His life was full and busy, and although he had many discomforts, even hardships, to suffer, we may believe that he found it interesting and enjoyed it thoroughly. The University Wits soon became jealous of the success won by this stranger from Stratford, who had had only a grammar school education—and not very much of *that*. Robert Greene, in a work which he called *A Groatsworth of Wit bought with a Million of Repentance*, and which he addressed to Marlowe, Nash, and Peele, wrote:

There is an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his *Tyger's heart wrapt in a player's hide* supposes he is as well able to bumbaste out a blanke verse as the best of you; and . . . is in his owne conceit the only Shake-scene in the countrie.

The quotation Greene gave was altered from a line in Shakespeare's *Henry VI*, "O tiger's heart wrapt in a woman's hide," and the meaning of the whole attack seems to be that Shakespeare had unfairly borrowed from the works of the other dramatists to deck out his own plays. But Greene, when he wrote these words, was poor and miserable and dying, and may be forgiven for feeling a little bitter against the younger man who was so prosperous and admired. Others among Shakespeare's companions knew him better and spoke of him very differently. A few months after Greene's death in 1592, his publisher, Henry Chettle, wrote an apology for having printed the ill-natured charge.



I am as sory [he said], as if the originall fault had beene my fault, because myselfe have seene his [Shakespeare's] demeanour no lesse civill than he is exelent in the qualitie he professes, besides divers of worship have reported his uprightnes of dealing, which argues his honesty, and his facetious grace in writing, that aprooves his art.

Shakespeare had made other friends too, some of them highly placed and able to help him in many ways. One of these friends was the Earl of Southampton, a young nobleman not yet twenty-one, said to be the handsomest of all the Court gallants. To him Shakespeare dedicated his poem *Venus and Adonis*, written in 1593. In 1594 the acting company to which Shakespeare belonged was summoned to act before the Queen, and he seems to have won her Majesty's favour, for after that she frequently commanded performances of his plays at Court.

One of the plays acted before the great Elizabeth was *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. All of you, probably, know something about this play: at least, you have heard of the fairy scenes, and Oberon and Titania, and Puck, and Bottom with his ass's head. It is one of the best plays for you to begin with when you read Shakespeare for yourselves, for it is a *young* play from beginning to end. Shakespeare put into it all his high spirits and delight in life; all his fine imagination and his whimsical fancies; all his tenderness and all his humour; all his memories of beautiful Warwickshire, and all his newly gained experience of the splendour and gaiety of a Court.

The play opens with the marriage festivities of Theseus, Duke of Athens, and Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons; but Shakespeare does not attempt to make these two like the ancient Greeks of history. He shows them as two splendid, majestic figures, such as the Elizabethans delighted to picture their kings and queens. The first scene is laid in the palace of Theseus, but we do not stop there long. Shakespeare quickly assembles all his chief characters in the "wood near Athens"—which is really a wood near Stratford—where the main action of his story takes place. It is the wood to which the youths and maidens go on May morning to bring home the



summer, where pale primroses spread themselves for a carpet, and ranks of cowslips stand, each bearing a fairy jewel in its ear. Somewhere within this wood is that bank

where the wild thyme blows,  
Where ox-lips and the nodding violet grows,  
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,  
With sweet musk-roses, and with eglantine.

Shakespeare knows it all so well, and loves it so dearly; and he brings us into it while it lies quiet and still under the moonlight, which turns its gleaming pools to silver and strews its green tree-shaded glades with liquid pearls. Here we may take our stand and watch the company assemble. First comes a pair of young lovers, Lysander and Hermia, fleeing from Athens because Hermia's father has bidden her marry Demetrius, whom she does not love, and Duke Theseus has warned her that, by the Athenian law, she must either die or spend the rest of her life in a convent if she does not obey. They pass swiftly into the depths of the wood; and then, following them, comes striding another young Athenian, brows black and hands clenched, resolved to find his loved Hermia and bring her back. This is Demetrius, and behind him steals a lovely, dark-haired, weeping maiden, whom, before he saw Hermia's brighter beauty, he had loved. She still loves him, and has told him of her friend Hermia's flight, hoping that the news will cure him of his passion, but instead it has driven him to the wood, and Helena has followed.

Scarcely have these two disappeared down a woodland path—leading another way from the path Lysander and Hermia have taken—than there comes a sound of heavy footsteps and loud voices breaking the stillness of the quiet night, and here is a company of Athenian workmen, who are making their clumsy way over the flower-besprinkled grass and talking earnestly of the play they are going to perform before the great Duke at his marriage feast. They are really just Warwickshire peasants, such as Shakespeare has seen often in his boyhood. He has listened to their talk and knows its every turn, knows



all their oddities, their awe of their betters, their simple earnestness; and now in his merry mood he has brought them into this wood to rehearse their play and to show us how English craftsmen amused themselves and their fellows in the great days of Elizabeth. There is Bottom, the weaver, Flute, the bellows-mender, Starveling, the tailor, Snout, the tinker, Snug, the joiner, and Quince, the carpenter. They pass on toward an open glade where they may rehearse, and leave the wood quiet as before.

Now that we are getting used to the silvery light of the wood we can see some of its true inhabitants—not the mortals who have broken in upon its quiet, but the elves and fairies who sleep all day among its fragrant blossoms and awake at night to dance and sport in its shades. Here is that tiny mischievous elf Puck, who delights to go about playing tricks upon the country-folk, and pinching lazy people black and blue; and here is his master, Oberon, King of the Fairies. Another moment, and Oberon's lovely Queen, Titania, appears, radiant in her shining robes, with her fairies, Cobweb, Peasblossom, Moth, and Mustard-seed, clad in their shimmering, pale-tinted gossamer. The King and Queen have quarrelled because Titania will not give up to Oberon a little changeling boy who was left in her charge; and now again there are angry words, and Titania goes off in a pet, while Oberon, left behind with Puck, plans how to force his obstinate lady to do his will. "Fetch me," he says to Puck, "the flower maidens call love-in-idleness;

"The juice of it on sleeping eyelids laid  
Will make or man or woman madly dote  
Upon the next live creature that it sees.  
Fetch me this herb; and be thou here again  
Ere the leviathan can swim a league."

"I'll put a girdle round about the earth in forty minutes," replies Puck, and off he goes.

Down a dark glade comes Demetrius, still raging and furious at not having found Hermia, though he has sought her



through many tangled paths; and after him comes poor weeping Helena. In his anger he turns on her roughly and bids her follow him no more; and though she pleads with him he still chides her and leaves her unkindly. But nothing can shake Helena's love, and still she follows him, and Oberon, pitying her unhappiness, resolves to help her. So when Puck comes back with the flower his master bids him search through the wood until he finds an Athenian youth with whom a fair lady is in love, and to anoint the youth's eyes with the flower at such a time as it will be certain that the first person he sees when he awakes will be the lady.

Next Shakespeare leads us to a lovely open glade where Titania lies asleep; her fairies have sung her lullaby, and then have crept away, leaving her alone. From behind a tree comes Oberon, who bends over Titania and squeezes the juice of the flower on her eyes:

"What thou seest when thou dost wake,  
Do it for thy true love take."

Then he disappears, and there enter Lysander and Hermia, very weary and footsore. They have lost their way in the wood and have wandered about until they can go no further. "Fair love," says Lysander,

"You faint with wandering in the wood;  
And to speak troth, I have forgot our way:  
We'll rest us, Hermia, if you think it good,  
And tarry for the comfort of the day."

They lie down and are soon asleep: and then comes in Puck. This, he thinks, must be the Athenian of whom his master spoke, so he squeezes the juice on Lysander's eyes, and goes out. As he disappears Demetrius and Helena come in from the other side of the glade, he still raging, she still pursuing. When he rushes out she has no breath to follow him, so she remains, still lamenting. Then she sees Lysander, thinks he is dead or wounded, and tries to rouse him, and he, springing up, begins at once to vow eternal love to her! Puck's charm has worked, and Lysander leaves Hermia, and follows



after Helena; and Hermia awaking, and finding herself deserted, goes in search of Lysander.

Still Titania sleeps, and then in comes the company of Athenian workmen. "Here's a marvellous convenient place for our rehearsal," says Quince, and so they set to work. Their play tells the classical story of Pyramus and Thisbe—how the two lovers speak through a chink in the wall between their two houses, how they agree to meet at a certain place, how Thisbe gets there first, sees a lion, and rushes from him, leaving her mantle behind her, how Pyramus, coming up and seeing the torn mantle, believes the lion has slain his love, and so plunges a dagger into his own heart, how Thisbe, returning from her hiding-place, finds him dead, and slays herself with the same dagger. This tragic story Quince and his company turn, by their acting, into the most comical of farces; Bottom, the weaver, in especial makes himself delightfully ridiculous.

Then enters Puck once more.

"What hempen homespuns have we swaggering here,  
So near the cradle of the fairy queen?"

He listens for a while, then determines to play them a trick; so when Bottom, in the course of the play, has to go behind a bush, Puck claps an ass's head upon him, and leads him out in sight of his companions, who flee from him in fear. The noise wakes Titania, and her eyes light on Bottom. "What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?" she cries, and begs him to sit beside her, while she winds her arms about his hairy neck, and calls her fairies to wait upon him.

Next Puck, finding that he has made a mistake in anointing Lysander's eyes, watches his opportunity and finds Demetrius asleep, and puts the magic juice on his eyes also. Demetrius, waking, sees Helena, and is at once as violently in love with her as he was before disdainful. Helena, believing she is mocked, grieves as deeply as does poor deserted Hermia; and so the complications go on. Everything is put right in the end, and Lysander and Hermia, Demetrius and Helena, Oberon and Titania, are left happy together. The play ends with the



performance of *Pyramus and Thisbe* before the Duke, to the immense delight of the audience.

Until you have read *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for yourself you can have no idea what a delightful play it is. The lovely fairy scenes; the interesting story of the four lovers; the fun and high spirits of the scenes that present Quince and Bottom and their comrades; the beautiful songs, and the splendid passages of the highest poetry that it contains—all these make it an enchanting piece of work such as cannot be matched in English literature, and which should be the special delight of English boys and girls.

## II. MIDDLE PLAYS

All this time Shakespeare had never been back to Stratford-on-Avon. We do not know how his wife and his three children had fared while he had been away, but we know that poor John Shakespeare, his father, had been going from bad to worse. He was in debt, and had several times been cited before the local court, and there seemed no prospect of things becoming any better. Then, after more than ten years, William Shakespeare felt that the time for which he had toiled and waited had come, and in 1596 we hear of him once more in his native town. After that we hear no more of John Shakespeare's difficulties; instead, we see him rising again to a position of comfortable independence. He must have felt very proud of this son of his, who had left Stratford a scapegrace at whom men shook their heads, and who had come back a man famous and respected, and with a modest fortune won by his genius and his industry.

We are not sure whether Shakespeare came home to Stratford in time to see his little son Hamnet, who died in August 1596, when he was eleven years old. There were now only two daughters left to Shakespeare, Susanna, thirteen years old, and Judith, eleven. They must have heard a great deal about their famous father, but neither of them could remember



him, and at first they must have felt shy and strange. But after 1596 he came down every year to spend some weeks or months at Stratford, and we are sure that it was not long before his daughters realized what an entirely satisfactory and delightful father he was. What stories he could tell, both out of his own head, and about the things he had seen and heard in far-off London! How he could mimic the town worthies for their benefit, and act little scenes before them, and make them shout with laughter as he showed them how Bottom, the weaver, stabbed himself for love of Thisbe, and how Sir John Falstaff told of his fight with the eleven rogues in buckram, when actually he had run away from two men. Shakespeare, on his side, delighted in these two fresh, blithe country girls, and watched his daughters grow up from children to winsome maidens with the keenest interest.

Between the years 1598 and 1601 Shakespeare wrote three comedies, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *As You Like It*, and *Twelfth Night*, and these are especially notable for their delightful heroines. There is madcap Beatrice, with her wit and her daring, and her staunch championship of Hero, her gentle cousin, who has been falsely accused by cruel enemies and deserted by Claudio, her lover. There is that other pair of cousins, Rosalind and Celia, so loving and loyal to each other, who go gallantly out to exile in the Forest of Arden, the high-spirited, quick-tongued Rosalind dressed as a shepherd and sweet Celia as a shepherdess. There is Viola, love-lorn, but meeting all her difficulties with a gay courage, and stately Olivia, who, young as she is, is so truly a great lady. No two of them are alike. Yet they have all some qualities in common.

The heroes, though they are brave and handsome, as heroes should be, are far outshone by these ladies of their loves. Benedick is brilliant, and Orlando is valiant and kind, and the Duke Orsino is noble in nature as well as in name, but not one is as enchanting as Beatrice or Rosalind or the rest of the sisterhood. All the villains are men: it is only when we come to Shakespeare's great tragedies that we find a woman as the



cause of misfortune, and perhaps only in *King Lear* and *Macbeth* that we see a woman who is really wicked.

But the heroines do not have it all their own way in these plays, for there is another group of characters which after its own fashion is as delightful as they. It is made up of the fools—the fools by profession, like Touchstone, the Duke's jester, and fools by nature, like the constables Dogberry and Verges. Not one of us but would have loved Touchstone, though we laughed at him, had we come upon him in the Forest of Arden, to which he had loyally followed his young mistress, Celia. We might have heard him mocking at the love-lorn swains—first Silvius, the young shepherd, then Orlando, who sighed and wrote flattering verses in the green shades of the forest; or arguing with the old shepherd, Corin, on the joys of a country life; or we might have watched him as Jacques did:

“he drew a dial from his poke,  
And, looking on it with lack-lustre eye,  
Says very wisely, ‘It is ten o’clock :  
Thus we may see,’ quoth he, ‘how the world wags.  
’Tis but an hour ago since it was nine;  
And after one hour more ’twill be eleven;  
And so, from hour to hour, we ripe and ripe,  
And then, from hour to hour, we rot and rot;  
And thereby hangs a tale.’”

Or, best of all, we might have seen him bringing up the clumsy, bashful country-maid, Audrey, that he and she might be married, with Orlando and Rosalind and the other couples, and introducing her as “a poor virgin, sir, an ill-favoured thing, sir, but mine own.”

Let us listen now to Dogberry, the constable, who in a street in Messina is giving his charge to the watch, and mixing up his words most wildly. “Who think you the most desartless man to be constable?” he asks, and a member of the watch answers: “Hugh Otecake, sir, or George Seacole; for they can write and read.”

*Dogberry.* Come hither, neighbour Seacole. God hath blessed you with a good name: to be a well-favoured man is the gift of fortune; but to write and read comes by nature.



*Second Watch.* Both which, master constable——

*Dogberry.* You have: I knew it would be your answer. Well, for your favour, sir, why, give God thanks, and make no boast of it; and for your writing and reading, let that appear when there is no need of such vanity. You are thought here to be the most senseless and fit man for the constable of the watch; therefore, bear you the lantern. This is your charge—you shall comprehend all vagrom men; you are to bid any man stand, in the prince's name.

*Second Watch.* How if a' will not stand?

*Dogberry.* Why, then, take no note of him, but let him go, and presently call the watch together, and thank God you are rid of a knave.

So the charge goes on; and we do not wonder that when, later, two men are arrested and brought before Dogberry, the way in which he deals with them (while the Sexton writes down all that is said) causes one of them to exclaim, "Away! you are an ass, you are an ass." "Dost thou not suspect my place?" asks the indignant Dogberry.

"Dost thou not suspect my years? O that he were here to write me down an ass!" [The Sexton has just gone out.] "But, masters, remember that I am an ass; though it be not written down, yet forget not that I am an ass. No, thou villain, thou art full of piety, as shall be proved upon thee by good witness. I am a wise fellow; and, which is more, an officer; and, which is more, a housholder; and, which is more, as pretty a piece of flesh as any is in Messina; and one that knows the law, go to; and a rich fellow enough, go to; and a fellow that hath had losses; and one that hath two gowns, and every thing handsome about him. Bring him away. O that I had been writ down an ass!"

There are other fools in the company, but none quite as rich as these. Feste, the clown in *Twelfth Night*, we remember rather for his songs than for his clowning. He sings sweet, melancholy ditties to the love-sick Duke—"Come away, come away, death," and

"O mistress mine, where are you roaming?  
Oh, stay and hear; your true love's coming,  
That can sing both high and low."

And when the play is over and the lovers all matched, he sings his parting song:



“When that I was and a little tiny boy,  
 With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,  
 A foolish thing was but a toy,  
 For the rain it raineth every day.

“A great while ago the world begun,  
 With hey, ho, the wind and the rain:—  
 But that’s all one, our play is done,  
 And we’ll strive to please you every day.”

Some of Shakespeare’s loveliest songs come in the three plays we have been talking about; and though a large part of each play is written in prose, the poetry, when it comes, is of the finest.

The years during which he was writing these comedies were, we may believe, happy years for Shakespeare. He had put all his family into a position of ease and comfort; he had learned to know the two daughters whom, before, he had not seen since their babyhood. In 1597 he bought for himself a large and comfortable house in his native town, known as New Place, and henceforward he was described in all official documents as “William Shakespeare of Stratford-on-Avon, gentleman.” When he came home for his yearly visit he was happily busy seeing to the decoration and repair of his house and the planting of an orchard. He looked forward to living there always after a few more years, and taking an active part in the town affairs.

In London, too, things were going well with him. Richard Burbage, the proprietor of the Theatre, had decided to pull it down and build a new theatre on Bankside, by the Thames. The new building was finished during 1599 and was called the Globe. Very soon it became the favourite theatre of the town, and flourished greatly. Shakespeare’s company of actors played there, and, by an arrangement with Burbage, a share of the profits was allotted to Shakespeare, so that money was coming in quickly and his prospects were brighter than ever.

It is no wonder, therefore, that the plays that he wrote were for the most part bright and happy ones. But he was not



always in a mirthful mood, and not always ready to bend his wise and kindly gaze on young lovers and delightful fools. There were graver things to think of, for the England of 1600 was not the triumphant, rejoicing England of 1588. The great Queen was beginning to fail, and who was to succeed her? James of Scotland, said most people, but there were others who put forward different claimants, and it seemed as if difficulties might arise. So far, patriotism and loyalty had gone together. Englishmen had felt that they could best serve their country by vigorously supporting Elizabeth. Now the time was coming when it would be harder to find the right way; and Shakespeare, who loved England dearly, had much serious matter for thought. The whole nation was becoming sterner and graver in its temper, the careless, lighthearted daring of the earlier days was gone. Puritanism was bringing more and more of the people under the strict rule of a religion that forbade all indulgences and merrymaking. Shakespeare, though he lost none of his high courage, felt the sobering influence of all these things. He was growing older, too, and seriousness comes with years. So it is quite natural that two tragedies should succeed the mirthful comedies *Much Ado*, *As You Like It*, and *Twelfth Night*.

The tragedies were called *Julius Cæsar* and *Hamlet*. In each of them there is a man who sees himself called to do a great and difficult thing, and has to choose the way that seems to him the best. Shakespeare shows us how hard it is to decide in such a case, and how easy to make mistakes; but he shows, too, that failure, though it bring disaster and even death, is better than consenting to what one believes to be evil. *Julius Cæsar* is the story of the Roman conqueror who, after a lifetime spent in doing great deeds and winning glory for himself and his country, has become the despotic ruler of Rome, and whose greatness is being marred by vanity and arrogance. Perhaps Shakespeare as he wrote it was thinking of Queen Elizabeth and the questions that were perplexing Englishmen; perhaps he meant to show that no good can come through



violence and murder, even when they are done with the best possible motives.

Yet *Julius Cæsar*, though it tells of war and death, is by no means a dark or dismal play. It has some fine, stirring scenes and some very noble characters. It is the play that young people should read first when they begin the tragedies of Shakespeare, for the question it discusses is clear and simple and the story it tells is both interesting and exciting.

*Hamlet* is altogether darker and more difficult; and in the plays that followed it the tragedy grows ever deeper. Shakespeare seems now to have come to a time when the sins and sorrows of the world drew his attention more powerfully than did its joy and beauty. Some people have thought that at this time a great trouble fell upon him; that he had to struggle against some terrible temptation and was very near to despair. It may have been so, though there is nothing in the very scanty records of his life to tell us what the trouble was. As far as we know, the first six years of the reign of James I, which were the years during which his darkest plays were written, saw Shakespeare at the height of his prosperity. The new King was as favourable to him as the old Queen had been. He was a popular actor and a successful playwright. The Globe Theatre was largely under his management, and he drew a considerable share of the profits made in it. He was able to make easy the last days of his father, who died in 1601, and to provide a good home for his mother until her death in 1608. He had many friends of all ranks. Tradition says that he was the centre of the brilliant group that assembled at the Mermaid Tavern, Bread Street, where Sir Walter Raleigh had established a kind of club for literary men, of which the poet Beaumont wrote:

What things have we seen,  
Done at the Mermaid! Heard words that have been  
So nimble, and so full of subtle flame,  
As if that every one from whom they came  
Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest,  
And had resolved to live a fool the rest  
Of his dull life.



We need not believe that Shakespeare must have felt all the woes of mankind before he could write about them. That is to think too lightly of his genius. Doubtless he had his sorrows and his trials, as other men have theirs, and doubtless these made him more understanding and sympathetic. But because he had powers beyond those of other men he could see deeper and feel more acutely, and could put himself in the place of a sinner or a tempted man and know what that man would think and feel.

In 1603 Shakespeare wrote two sombre plays which have more of tragedy in them than of comedy, though they end happily—*Measure for Measure* and *Troilus and Cressida*. Between 1604 and 1608 he wrote his great tragedies, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus*. They are great and wonderful works, and they show the effect of sin and suffering on human lives as no one but Shakespeare has ever shown it.

### III. LATER PLAYS

The troubled years—if troubled years there were—passed, and the period that followed gave us three plays as full of beauty and of sunshine as that other great three, *Much Ado*, *As You Like It*, and *Twelfth Night*. But they were in many ways different from the earlier comedies. They did not sparkle so much, but they shone with a clearer, lovelier light. Their heroines were not brilliant and witty, like Beatrice and Rosalind, and they were not gentle, and apt to lean on someone stronger than themselves, like Hero and Celia. They had not Viola's gay courage nor Olivia's stateliness; and yet there was in them something of all these qualities, joined to a grace and loveliness that was specially their own. It is difficult to say just why Imogen, and Perdita, and Miranda so charm the hearts of all who read of them in *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*. They are such pure, bright figures that they seem, like Spenser's Una, to make "a sunshine in the shady place" and give something of their own beauty to the whole play.



All three plays come very near to being tragedies, and the happy ending is only reached through much suffering. There are none of the fools who have delighted us in Shakespeare's earlier works, though Autolycus, the pedlar, is a droll knave who is almost as entertaining. Then we have the sprite Ariel, who is a finer and daintier Puck, and the monster Caliban, who stands for the grosser part of man's nature. In all these three plays there are older characters who take parts as important as those of the young lovers; the story of Hermione, in *The Winter's Tale*, is as interesting as that of her daughter, Perdita; and Prospero, Miranda's father, is the character in *The Tempest* on whom the whole plot depends.

We will take one or two scenes from *The Winter's Tale* to show Shakespeare in the serene and happy mood in which he gave us these highest glories of his genius, first giving, very briefly, an outline of the story.

Leontes, King of Sicilia, wrongfully believes that his wife Hermione is unfaithful to him and that she loves his friend Polixenes, King of Bohemia. Therefore he causes her to be shamefully imprisoned, and commands that her infant daughter shall be taken to some desert place and there left to perish. But the lords and ladies about the King are more merciful than he is. They know that their Queen is innocent, and they love her for her virtue and her kindness and her noble heart; but they know, too, that it is useless to attempt to convince Leontes, who is mad with jealous rage. So Paulina, Hermione's lady-in-waiting, tells the King that his queen is dead, and hides her in her own home; and Antigonus, her husband, to whom the baby has been given, places her, with a purse of gold, where some passer-by is likely to find her. She is found by a shepherd, who takes her home and brings her up as his child. The scene here following opens sixteen years later in the shepherd's cottage, on the day of the sheep-shearing feast.

Perdita, the exiled princess, who has no idea that the shepherd is not her true father, is there in her pretty holiday dress,



and Prince Florizel, the son of Polixenes, King of Bohemia, is talking to her. Florizel first saw her by chance when his falcon flew across her father's ground, and at once fell in love with her beauty and her sweetness. Perdita, though she loves this handsome, gallant stranger, knows that his father will not agree to their marriage and fears his anger when he finds out that his son has chosen so lowly a maid to be his wife. Florizel tries to encourage her:

"Be merry, gentle:  
Strangle such thoughts as these with any thing  
That you behold the while. Your guests are coming:  
Lift up your countenance, as it were the day  
Of celebration of that nuptial which  
We two have sworn shall come."

So sweet Perdita gathers her courage; and soon her father comes in with some of the guests. "Fie, daughter!" he says,

"when my old wife liv'd, upon  
This day she was both pantler, butler, cook,  
Both dame and servant; welcom'd all; served all:  
Would sing her song, and dance her turn; now here,  
At upper end o' the table, now i' the middle. . . .  
You are retir'd,  
As if you were a feasted one, and not  
The hostess of the meeting; pray you, bid  
These unknown friends to 's welcome."

The unknown friends are Florizel's father and Camillo, one of his lords, in disguise. They have heard tales of the Prince and the lovely shepherd's daughter, and have come to see for themselves how much is true.

*Perdita* [to *Polixenes*]. Sir, welcome :  
It is my father's will I should take on me  
The hostess-ship o' the day. [To *Camillo*] You're welcome, sir.  
Give me those flowers there, Dorcas. Reverend sirs,  
For you there's rosemary and rue: these keep  
Seeming and savour all the winter long:  
Grace and remembrance be to you both,  
And welcome to our shearing!

*Polixenes.* Shepherdess—  
A fair one are you—well you fit our ages  
With flowers of winter.

*Perdita.* Sir, the year growing ancient,  
Not yet on summer's death, nor on the birth



Of trembling winter, the fairest flowers o' the season  
Are our carnations, and streak'd gillyvors. . . .

Here's flowers for you;

Hot lavender, mints, savory, marjoram;  
The marigold, that goes to bed wi' the sun,  
And with him rises weeping: these are flowers  
Of middle summer, and I think they are given  
To men of middle age. You're very welcome.

Then Perdita turns to Florizel:

"Now, my fair'st friend,  
I would I had some flowers o' the spring, that might  
Become your time of day. . . .

O Proserpina,  
For the flowers now, that, frightened, thou let'st fall  
From Dis's waggon! Daffodils,  
That come before the swallow dares, and take  
The winds of March with beauty: violets dim,  
But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes,  
Or Cytherea's breath; pale primroses,  
That die unmarried, ere they can behold  
Bright Phœbus in his strength—a malady  
Most incident to maids; bold ox-lips, and  
The crown-imperial; lilies of all kinds,  
The flower-de-luce being one! . . .

Come, take your flowers.

Methinks I play as I have seen them do  
In Whitsun pastorals: sure this robe of mine  
Does change my disposition."

Her sweetness and her grace as she hands to each of the guests  
who gather round her a posy of fragrant flowers move Florizel  
to rapture, so that he cries out:

"What you do  
Still betters what is done. When you speak, sweet,  
I'd have you do it ever: when you sing,  
I'd have you buy and sell so; so give alms;  
Pray so; and for the ordering your affairs,  
To sing them too: when you do dance, I wish you  
A wave o' the sea, that you might ever do  
Nothing but that; move still, still so,  
And own no other function; each your doing,  
So singular in each particular,  
Crowns what you are doing in the present deed,  
That all your acts are queens."

Even Polixenes, who has come in a fault-finding mood, is  
moved to say to Camillo:



## THE GOLDEN ROAD IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

---

“This is the prettiest low-born lass that ever  
Ran on the green-sward: nothing she does, or seems,  
But smacks of something greater than herself;  
Too noble for this place.”

And Camillo replies,

“Good sooth, she is  
The queen of curds and cream.”

Then the festivities begin, and the shepherds and shepherdesses and all the guests dance to the merry music of the pipe and tabor; and again Perdita draws all eyes, so light and graceful she is as she moves among the homely swains with handsome Florizel, her partner. Polixenes, watching them, sees his son's devotion to this shepherd lass and his anger rises. A servant now comes running in, crying:

“O master, if you did but hear the pedlar at the door, you would never dance again after a tabor and pipe; no, the bagpipe could not move you: he sings several tunes faster than you'll tell money; he utters them as he had eaten ballads, and all men's ears grew to his tunes. . . . He hath songs for man or woman, of all sizes; no milliner can so fit his customers with gloves. . . . He hath ribands of all colours i' the rainbow; . . . inkles, caddisses, cambrics, lawns; why he sings 'em over as they were gods or goddesses; you would think a smock were a she-angel, he so chants to the sleeve-hand and the work about the square on 't.”

“Prithee, bring him in; and let him approach singing,” is the order, and in comes Autolycus, singing:

“Lawn as white as driven snow;  
Cyprus black as e'er was crow;  
Gloves as sweet as damask roses;  
Masks for faces and for noses:  
Bugle bracelet, necklace-amber,  
Perfume for a lady's chamber;  
Golden coifs and stomachers,  
For my lads to give their dears:  
Pins and poking-sticks of steel,  
What maids lack from head to heel:  
Come buy of me, come; come buy, come buy:  
Buy, lads, or else your lasses cry:  
Come buy.”

The rustics gather round and the swains buy fairings for the



maids; and Autolycus, the witty rogue, cheats where he can, and goes off singing:

“Will you buy any tape,  
Or lace for your cape,  
My dainty duck, my dear-a?  
Any silk, any thread,  
Any toys for your head,  
Of the new’st, and fin’st, fin’st wear-a?  
Come to the pedlar:  
Money’s a medler,  
That doth utter all men’s ware-a.”

Next there is a dance by carters, shepherds, neatherds, and swineherds, the rest of the company looking on. Meantime, Polixenes speaks to Florizel, who does not know him, but calls on him to witness his protestation of love for Perdita. The two take hands and plight their troth, and the shepherd gives his consent to their marriage; but Polixenes interrupts their pledges. “Have you a father?” he asks Florizel, and the youth replies, “I have, but what of him?” “Knows he of this?” “He neither does nor shall.” Then Polixenes’ wrath rises, and after a few more questions he throws off his disguise. He bitterly reproaches the youth,

“Whom son I dare not call; thou art too base  
To be acknowledg’d; thou a sceptre’s heir,  
That thus affect’st a sheep-hook!”

Then to the shepherd:

“Thou old traitor,  
I am sorry that by hanging thee I can  
But shorten thy life one week.”

And to Perdita:

“And thou, fresh piece  
Of excellent witchcraft, who of force must know  
The royal fool thou cop’st with,  
I’ll have thy beauty scratch’d with briers, and made  
More homely than thy state.”

Then come more threats. If Florizel will not promise to give up Perdita and come back at once to his father’s Court he shall be disinherited. The shepherd shall be respited, but if Perdita ever sees the Prince again, says Polixenes finally to her,



"I will devise a death as cruel for thee  
As thou art tender to 't."

Polixenes goes out in a rage. But his hard words have not crushed Perdita, though they have cruelly wounded her; she lifts her head, and speaks bravely to her lover:

"Even here undone!  
I was not much afeard; for once or twice  
I was about to speak, and tell him plainly  
The selfsame sun that shines upon his court  
Hides not his visage from our cottage, but  
Looks on alike. Will 't please you, sir, begone?  
I told you what would come of this; beseech you,  
Of your own state take care: this dream of mine,—  
Being now awake, I'll queen it no inch farther,  
But milk my ewes, and weep."

But gallant Florizel will not hear of their parting. "Why look you so upon me?" he asks Camillo.

"I am but sorry, not afeard; delay'd,  
But nothing alter'd: what I was, I am;  
More straining on, for plucking back, not following  
My leash unwillingly."

Soon he wins Camillo over to his side, and wins Perdita too, so that she promises to marry him, and go with him to some country beyond his father's realm, that there they may seek their fortunes. Then Camillo, who was once a loyal follower of Leontes, King of Sicily, and longs to see his old home again, persuades them to go with him there. Leontes, who has long ago bitterly repented of his cruelty to his wife and his child, will receive them gladly; and so the young lovers set sail with Camillo for Sicily.

The story ends happily for everyone. Perdita is recognized as Leontes' daughter, Hermione is restored to her husband and her throne, Polixenes is reconciled to his son and to Leontes, and the shepherd and Camillo rewarded. Every scene in the play is full of beauty, and the more often it is read the greater is the delight that it gives.

*The Tempest*, the last of these three marvellous plays, was finished, we believe, in 1611, and after that Shakespeare spent



very little time in London. He went back to Stratford and lived among his old friends, and occupied himself chiefly in beautifying his house and garden and helping in the public business of his native town. His wife and his daughter Judith were with him at New Place. Susanna had married in 1607 John Hall, a physician of the town, and was living near by, and her little daughter Elizabeth doubtless found her grandfather as splendid a playfellow as his own children had done. Friends from London came occasionally to visit him. Richard Burbage, the actor, came sometimes, and Ben Jonson, and Michael Drayton, the poet.

We may believe that these last years were peaceful and happy. Shakespeare had fulfilled his ambition, and held an honourable position in his native town. His family were near him, for when, in 1616, Judith married Thomas Quiney, the son of an old friend of her father's, they too settled in Stratford. We know of no troubles that met him in this later time, and the illness that brought about his death seems to have been a short one. He died on April 23, 1616, at the age of fifty-two, and was buried in Stratford Church. Above his grave were written the lines:

Good friend, for Jesus' sake forbear  
To dig the dust enclosed heare;  
Blest be the man that spares these stones,  
And curst be he that moves my bones.

When we put together all that the most careful and industrious research has been able to find out concerning the life of William Shakespeare it comes to very little. Many fanciful guesses have been made as to what he thought or said or did at certain times in his life, and these may or may not be true. The best way in which we can get to know him is by reading his works, and if we do this we shall most of us agree with Ben Jonson when he says, "I loved the man and do honour his memory, on this side idolatry as much as any. He was, indeed, honest and of an open and free nature."



---

## *Chapter XIX*

### THE PASSING OF THE ELIZABETHANS

#### I. BEN JONSON

**T**HE Elizabethan age did not come to an end when Elizabeth died in 1603. Many of the men who had made her reign glorious in literature—Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, Lodge and Lyly and Drayton, Hakluyt and Raleigh and Francis Bacon—outlived her. Then there was the new generation, born and bred Elizabethans and full of the Elizabethan spirit—John Fletcher, Francis Beaumont, Philip Massinger, John Ford, and a host of others. Most of these had produced no work of importance before the great Queen's death, but they, with the older writers, held the high places in literature all through the reign of James I. One by one they dropped away, but the great race of the Elizabethans did not entirely disappear until James Shirley died in the year of the Great Fire, 1666.

When James I came to the throne the theatre was still in high favour with the people, and Londoners of all classes—nobles, merchants, craftsmen, apprentices, undergraduates from the universities, law students from the Temple, rogues and vagabonds from the squalid lanes and alleys of the city—crowded the playhouses at every performance. The Puritans, who looked upon a play as a work of the devil and believed that to set foot in a theatre was to commit a deadly sin, were increasing in numbers every year, but so far this had made little difference in the size of the audiences. James favoured the players as Elizabeth had done, and often commanded a particular company to appear at Court; and there were besides many masques and pageants and splendid shows specially devised for the royal entertainment.



Next to Shakespeare, the favourite playwright of the early years of the seventeenth century was Ben Jonson. He was nine years younger than Shakespeare, and his first play—a comedy called *Every Man in His Humour*—was acted in 1598. It was a great success and made Jonson famous; but in the plays that followed he was not so fortunate. He tried comedy again in *Every Man out of His Humour* (1599), satire in *Cynthia's Revels* and *Poetaster* (1600), and tragedy in *Sejanus* (1603), but none of them seemed quite to suit the public taste. He was unfortunate, too, in his relations with the dramatists and actors with whom he had to work. Jonson had none of Shakespeare's wise forbearance and genial, sunshiny temper. He was vain and quarrelsome and obstinately set on his own opinions. His manners were rough and overbearing, he was clumsy and unpleasing in appearance. All these things people noticed long before they found out that he had an honest, upright, generous soul, and a strong courage that nothing could daunt. So Ben Jonson was always in some sort of trouble with his fellows. A few months after the appearance of *Every Man in His Humour* he fought a duel with an actor, Gabriel Spencer, whom he killed. He was imprisoned for a short time, and only escaped further punishment by pleading his privilege as a "clerk." A little later he had a great quarrel with several other dramatists, and this went on for months, each side saying the bitterest, most savage things they could think of about the other. Shakespeare, when Robert Greene had made a spiteful attack upon him, had gone calmly on his way and said nothing, but this was impossible to a man of Jonson's temper. He hit back as hard as he could, and *Cynthia's Revels* and *Poetaster* are full of keen gibes against his enemies.

By 1603 the quarrel was over and the two parties reconciled, and Jonson joined with his late enemies in preparing shows and entertainments in connexion with the accession of James I. In 1604 he and Marston and Chapman wrote together a comedy which they called *Eastward Hoe!* It is about an old city goldsmith, Touchstone, and his wife and his daughters



and his apprentices, the one idle and the other industrious; and in contrast with these there is a group of wild and adventurous characters, Sir Petronel Flush and Captain Seagull and others, who have a plan for making their fortunes by a voyage to Virginia, where "golde is more plentiful than copper is with us," and "for rubies and diamonds, they go forth on holydays and gather 'hem by the seashore." It is an amusing and delightful play, but it got its authors into serious trouble. James had been much annoyed by remarks made on several occasions by one and another of his English subjects about the number of needy Scots who had followed him to England and had been given places and fortunes, and he was determined to stop all unseemly jesting on the subject; so when it was pointed out to him that in the play of *Eastward Hoe!* there was a speech reflecting on his countrymen, he was very angry. The words complained of were spoken by Captain Seagull:

"But as for them [the Scots] there are no greater friends to Englishmen and England, when they are out on't, in the world than they are. And for my part, I would a hundred thousand of 'hem were there, for we are all one countrymen now, ye know, and we should find ten times more comfort of them there than we do here."

This does not seem a very terrible insult to the Scottish nation, but it was quite enough for King James. Jonson, Marston, and Chapman were imprisoned and were in danger of having their ears and noses cut, as was common in such cases. Happily they escaped this punishment, and were soon released. The King seems quickly to have forgotten his anger, for before long Jonson was writing masques to be acted at Court; and then came the four great comedies that have given him his high place among English dramatists—*Volpone* (1605), *The Silent Woman* (1609), *The Alchemist* (1610), and *Bartholomew Fair* (1614).

All of these are masterpieces, with good plots and witty dialogue and amusing situations. They were called "comedies of humour," but "humour" for the Elizabethans had not the meaning that it has for us to-day. They had a theory that a



man's body contained various fluids or "humours," and that an excessive quantity of any one of these humours affected his disposition. Too much of one humour made him melancholy, of another merry, of another selfish, of another suspicious, and so on. This is the idea of Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour*, and it is, more or less, the idea of all his comedies. It is very clearly illustrated in *The Alchemist*.

In 1610, when this play was written, London was full of quacks and magicians who professed to be able to cure every sort of ailment and work every kind of wonder if a sufficient payment were given them. They found plenty of people foolish enough to believe what they said, and every day there were complaints from people who had been cheated and sometimes ruined. Jonson's *Alchemist* ridiculed both the knaves and their victims, and we are told that soon after it was produced a falling off in these cases of trickery was noticed. The play tells the story of a certain rogue, Subtle, who for a time drove a very profitable trade as an alchemist—that is, a man who has discovered the secret of how to turn base metals into gold. At the beginning of the play he is hungry and penniless, taking his "meal of steam in from cook's stalls" at Pie Corner. Here, by chance, he meets Face, an impudent, amusing rascal who is butler to a wealthy gentleman named Lovewit. This gentleman has gone away from London because of the plague that has been raging in the city and has left Face in charge of his house. Very soon the two rogues make an agreement together, and Subtle calls in the help of a female friend, Dol Common. Subtle comes to live in Lovewit's house, sets up his forge, and gathers together all sorts of strange vessels and weird properties to strike awe into the people whom Face and Dol Common induce to come and see him. Face dresses up each evening as a swaggering captain and goes about in all sorts of public places talking about the wonderful alchemist and advising people to go and see what marvels he can work for them. In the daytime he dresses as Subtle's assistant and pretends to hold him in the highest reverence.



The first person sent in is Dapper, a lawyer's clerk. "I lighted on him last night in Holborn, at the Dagger," says Face. The clerk is in the habit of betting, and Face has persuaded him that the alchemist can provide him with a "familiar" who will make him successful in all his ventures. Poor Dapper is fooled to the uttermost. He is made to believe that the Queen of Fairy claims him for her nephew and wishes to see him; he is promised a familiar who will enable him to "win up all the money in the town" and "blow up gamester after gamester as they do crackers in a puppet play." He believes all this, and gives Subtle all the money he has about him; and he is told to come again next day at noon, having in the meantime prepared himself by fasting and purification for the mystic rites that are to be performed.

Next arrives Abel Drugger, a seller of tobacco. "I am a young beginner," he explains,

"and am building  
Of a new shop, an't like your worship, just  
At corner of a street.—Here is the plot on't—  
And I would know by art, sir, of your worship,  
Which way I should make my door, by necromancy,  
And where my shelves; and which should be for boxes,  
And which for pots. I would be glad to thrive, sir,  
And I was wish'd to your worship by a gentleman,  
One Captain Face, that says you know men's planets  
And their good angels and their bad."

Abel receives a learned answer and goes away happy, having given up all his money, and arranged to come again next day.

Then appears Sir Epicure Mammon, and with him Pertinax Surly, a gamester. Sir Epicure desires no less than the philosopher's stone, which can convert all metals into gold. His one desire is to be rich, and he thinks of nothing else. All his dreams are of owning gold and treasure and in them he sees dazzling heaps of the precious metal rising before him. Now he believes that his dreams are about to come true.

"This is the day, wherein to all my friends  
I will pronounce the happy word BE RICH!"



Surly is not to be taken in, but Face, as the servant, and Subtle, in his grave alchemist's robe, so work upon Sir Epicure that he takes no notice of his friend's warning, and goes away feeling quite sure that soon the philosopher's stone will be his, and not regretting the ten pounds he has given to the alchemist to buy new materials required for his operations. Scarcely has he gone when another knock is heard, and there enters a messenger, Ananias, from the church at Amsterdam. Subtle has previously promised the representatives of this church enormous sums of money, by means of which they will be able to spread their own faith and overcome that of their opponents, and they have given him a hundred and twenty pounds to carry on the work. But now they are growing suspicious, and Ananias says that they will give no more until they have seen some result for their money. Subtle and Face first try to mystify him by strange-sounding terms, and talk of

Ars sacra

Or chrysopœia or spagyrica,  
Or the pamphysick or panarchick knowledge,

and so on. But Ananias is not to be overawed, so Subtle pretends to fly in a rage, and drives him forth, bidding him,

"Send your elders  
Hither to make atonement for you quickly,  
And give me satisfaction; or out goes  
The fire; and down the alembics and the furnace. . . .  
All hope of rooting out the bishops  
Or the antichristian hierarchy shall perish,  
If they stay three score minutes."

He speedily returns with a pastor of the church, Tribulation Wholesome, whom Subtle easily persuades that he can supply the talisman they want, through which they can obtain enough gold

To pay an army in the field, to buy  
The King of France out of his realms, or Spain  
Out of his Indies. . . .

Even the med'cinal use shall make you a faction  
And party in the realm. As, put the case,  
That some great man in state, he have the gout,  
Why, you but send three drops of your elixir,  
You help him straight; there you have made a friend.



Tribulation gives more money for coal and other necessities, and goes away with all his doubts removed.

Last comes Kastril, a young man who has just inherited a fortune of three thousand a year,

A gentleman newly warm in his land,  
Scarce cold in his one and twenty.

He wishes to learn how to behave himself as a gallant about town, and he brings with him his sister, a rich young widow, who desires a second husband.

The rest of the story must be told very shortly. All these dupes return to Lovewit's house at the appointed time, and there are misunderstandings and complications of the most comical kind. Then Lovewit comes home, quite unexpectedly, and Face hastily turns into a butler again and makes up various tales to explain why all these people are in the house. But Lovewit is not to be deceived, so in the end Face confesses all, and he and his master join together to get the better of the impostor. They threaten Subtle and Dol Common with all the terrors of the law, until the two flee from the house, leaving their spoils behind them. Face and his master divide the money, and Lovewit marries the rich young widow.

*The Alchemist*, with the other three comedies, established Jonson's fame, and during the later years of his life he reigned as a sort of king over the other writers of the day. At the famous meetings held at the Devil Tavern, Temple Bar, they gathered round him, and offered him enthusiastic homage. There was a band of younger poets who delighted to call themselves his "sons," and they have left many records of these meetings. They have preserved for us the picture of the old poet, grown corpulent and unwieldy in his age, of his "rocky face," the stoop of his great shoulders, his loud voice, and overbearing manners. We see him sitting at the head of the table while toasts were drunk and witty jests went round, and the mirth grew faster and more furious as the night went on. Among the company was a young poet named Robert Herrick, son of a goldsmith of Cheapside, who had lately left



St John's College, Cambridge, and settled in London. He was one of the most devoted of Jonson's "sons," and highly favoured by the "master." He it is who has told us, in poems addressed to Ben Jonson, much of what we know about these "lyric feasts,"

Where we such clusters had,  
As made us nobly wild, not mad;  
And yet each verse of thine  
Outdid the meat, outdid the frolic wine.

My Ben!  
Or come again;  
Or send to us  
Thy wit's great overplus;  
But teach us yet  
Wisely to husband it,  
Lest we that talent spend:  
And having once brought to an end  
That precious stock, the store  
Of such a wit the world should have no more.

Ben Jonson died in 1637 and was buried in Westminster Abbey, where his grave bears the inscription, "O rare Ben Jonson!"

## II. FRANCIS BACON

There were, among these later Elizabethan writers, two great men who were not dramatists—Francis Bacon and Walter Raleigh. Both were men of action as well as writers, and had done their country good service in many ways; both were well on in middle age when James I came to the throne. Bacon was born in January 1561; his graceful answer to the Queen when she once asked him his age was—"I am two years younger than your Majesty's happy reign." He was the younger son of Sir Nicholas Bacon, the Lord Keeper, and nephew of Lord Burghley. He became a famous lawyer, a Member of Parliament, and an officer of State, but with it all he managed to find time for the study that he loved. While he was quite a young man he made up his mind what his chief work in life was to be. He believed that his great gifts had been given him that he might be of service to mankind,



and he decided that the best way in which he could use them was in scientific research. "The services that statesmen can do," he says, "extend over narrow spaces and last but for short times; whereas the work of the Inventor, though a thing of less pomp and shew, is felt everywhere and lasts for ever." Nevertheless, he felt he could not give himself entirely up to study, "a man's own country has some special claims upon him." Religion has its claims too, and he hoped "to get something done for the good of men's souls." But the research was to come first, and to that all his life through he gave his finest and his best efforts.

Unfortunately Bacon's practice was not always guided by his theory. He knew the right, but often he did the wrong. His noble conception of a life devoted to the service of mankind fitted in ill with the meannesses and deceits that he allowed himself to commit in order to gain his own selfish ends. Yet when he turned to the work that he loved Bacon became another man. There he was genuinely the truth-seeker, enthusiastic and devoted, with no thought of self, and ready to make any sacrifice that would help him to win the knowledge he sought.

He planned that he would write a great book dealing with every kind of knowledge that is open to man. First of all he would set down clearly how far man had advanced in the study of each branch of knowledge up to that present day; next he would show how the understanding could best be used in studying the works of nature; then he would collect and record all the facts that could be discovered, and go on to show how to use these facts in making discoveries and inventions that would be of service to mankind.

It was an enormous piece of work that was thus planned, and when Elizabeth died Bacon had completed only the first part of it. He was writing a first draft in English, but he meant to rewrite it in Latin, the "universal language" of scholars. "For," he said, "these modern languages will at one time or another play the bankrupt with books, and since



I have lost much time with this age I would be glad if God would give me leave to recover it with posterity." In the same way he translated his other English works—the *History of Henry VII* and the *Essays*—into Latin, that each might "live and be a citizen of the world as English books are not."

We will stay for a moment to look at these essays of Bacon, which are the best known of all his works. The first edition was published in 1597, and they have been popular and widely read ever since. They have nothing to do with his scientific research, but are on all sorts of subjects such as he thought might be interesting to readers in general. There are essays *Of Truth*, *Of Revenge*, *Of Parents and Children*, *Of Boldness*, *Of Travel*, *Of Youth and Age*, *Of Friendship*, *Of Riches*, and many more. Here is part of the first two paragraphs of the essay *Of Gardens*.

God Almighty first planted a garden; and indeed it is the purest of human pleasures. It is the greatest refreshment of the spirits of man; without which, buildings and palaces are but gross handy-works; and a man shall ever see that when ages grow to civility and elegancy, men come to build stately, sooner than to garden finely, as if gardening were the greater perfection. I do hold it in the royal ordering of gardens, there ought to be gardens for all the months in the year; in which, severally, things of beauty may be then in season.

Bacon then gives a long delightful list of the plants that may be grown in each month of the year, and goes on:

And because the breath of flowers is far sweeter in the air, where it comes and goes, like the warbling of music, than in the hand, therefore nothing is more fit for that delight, than to know what be the flowers and plants that do best perfume the air. Roses, damask and red, are fast flowers of their smells; so that you may walk by a whole row of them, and find nothing of their sweetness; yea, though it be in a morning's dew. Bays likewise yield no smell as they grow; rosemary little; nor sweet marjoram. That which above all others yields the sweetest smell in the air, is the violet; especially the white double violet, which comes twice a year, about the middle of April, and about Bartholomew-tide. Next to that is the musk rose; then the strawberry leaves dying, with a most excellent cordial smell; then the flower of the vines—it is a little dust, like the dust of a bent, which grows upon the cluster, in the first



coming forth; then sweet-brier; then wallflowers, which are very delightful to be set under a parlour or lower chamber window; then pinks and gilliflowers, especially the matted pink and clove gilliflower; then the flowers of the lime-tree; then the honeysuckles, so they be somewhat afar off. Of beanflowers I speak not, because they are field flowers; but those which perfume the air most delightfully, not passed by as the rest, but being trodden upon and crushed, are three; that is burnet, wild thyme, and water mints. Therefore you are to set whole alleys of them, to have the pleasure when you walk or tread.

The accession of James gave Bacon fresh hope that his great work would find royal favour, for James was a scholar and a philosopher, and might well be expected to take more interest in a book on science than Elizabeth would have done. So he made haste to finish the second part of the English version, and in 1605 it was published, with the title *Two Books of the Advancement of Learning*, and with a dedication addressed to his Majesty King James I.

I am not going to try to tell you here, in detail, what *The Advancement of Learning* is about, but I will quote just one passage to show you something of the style in which it is written:

For if these two things be supposed that a man set before him honest and good ends, and again, that he be resolute, constant and true unto them; it will follow that he shall mould himself into all virtue at once. And this is indeed like the work of nature; whereas the other course is like the work of the hand. For as when a carver makes an image he shapes only that part whereupon he worketh; as if he be upon the face, that part which shall be the body is but a rude stone still, till such times as he comes to it. But contrariwise, when nature makes a flower or living creature she formeth rudiments of all the parts at one time. So in obtaining virtue by habit, while a man practiseth temperance he doth not profit much to fortitude nor the like; but when he dedicateth and applieth himself to good ends, look, what virtue soever the pursuit and passage towards those ends doth commend unto him, he is invested with a precedent disposition to conform himself thereunto, which state of mind Aristotle doth excellently express himself that it ought not to be called virtuous, but divine.

To Bacon's great disappointment, King James took very little interest in the *Advancement*. Its ideas were much too new



and daring for his unadventurous, though shrewd, intelligence. He was a scholar, but he had no originality of mind; he could follow along the well-worn paths, but did not think of trying to find new ways. He did not believe that he would gain glory, as Bacon promised, if he showed himself a friend to this new scientific method. He took scarcely any notice of the book, and most English scholars followed his example.

This was a great blow to Bacon, but he did not lose courage. He went steadily on with his work and gave to it all the time he could spare from the active concerns that occupied most of his days during the next fifteen years. He worked hard at his profession and became an eminent lawyer. In 1618 he was made Lord Chancellor and Baron Verulam; and in 1620 he published *Novum Organum*, which was the Latin version of the first half of his great work.

Less than six months afterward came Bacon's fall. He was accused of having taken bribes from people whose causes he had to judge, was fined £40,000 and imprisoned in the Tower during the King's pleasure. The fine was remitted, and after two days' imprisonment Bacon was released. But his public career was over. He was forbidden to hold any office, or to sit in Parliament, and he was disgraced in the eyes of his countrymen. How far he deserved his punishment we do not know. He admitted that he had taken bribes, but declared that he did so thinking no harm, and because it was the custom of the time; and he solemnly vowed that a bribe had never made him give a wrongful judgment.

Five years of life remained to him, and he spent them working steadily and bravely at his great, lifelong labour. He published his *De Augmentis*, which is *The Advancement of Learning* translated into Latin and much enlarged, his *History of Henry VII*, and a complete edition of his *Essays*. On April 9, 1626, he died. "For my name and memory," he wrote in his will, "I leave it to men's charitable speeches, and to foreign nations, and the next ages."



### III. WALTER RALEIGH

Walter Raleigh was an even more notable man of action than Francis Bacon. He was an adventurer, a sailor, a soldier, a Member of Parliament, a scientist, a courtier; and, added to all these, he was a poet and a historian. Like Drake and many another famous Elizabethan, he came from Devonshire. His father was a country gentleman of only a moderate fortune, and we all know the story of how the handsome young gallant came up to London and won Elizabeth's favour by spreading his fine cloak over a muddy place, that her shoes might not be soiled. Whether in this way or some other, he did win her favour, and kept it, though there were times when he, like most of her other followers, came under her displeasure, and was banished from her Court. He was a friend of Spenser's and was with him in Ireland, and he delighted in *The Faerie Queene*. The two poets read their verses together, and each paid the other those high-sounding compliments that seem to have come naturally to the men of that heroic age.

We cannot follow Raleigh all through his adventurous life, though it would make the finest of stories. We are thinking of him now as a writer, and especially as one of those writers who helped to lengthen out the Elizabethan age into the reign of James I. We have already seen his account of the last fight of his kinsman, Sir Richard Grenville, in the little *Revenge* which was published in Hakluyt's *Voiages*. Here is one of his lyrics, called *The Pilgrimage*:

Give me my scallop-shell of quiet,  
 My staff of faith to walk upon,  
 My scrip of joy, immortal diet,  
 My bottle of salvation,  
 My gown of glory, hope's true gage;  
 And thus I'll take my pilgrimage.  
 Blood must be my body's balmer;  
 No other balm will there be given;  
 Whilst my soul, like quiet palmer,  
 Travelleth towards the land of heaven;



## THE PASSING OF THE ELIZABETHANS

---

Over the silver mountains,  
Where spring the nectar fountains;  
There will I kiss  
The bowl of bliss;  
And drink mine everlasting fill  
Upon every milken hill.  
My soul will be a-dry before;  
But after, it will thirst no more.

Then by that happy blissful day,  
More peaceful pilgrims I shall see,  
That have cast off their rags of clay,  
And walk apparell'd fresh like me.  
I'll take them first  
To quench their thirst  
And taste of nectar suckets,  
At those clear wells  
Where sweetness dwells,  
Drawn up by saints in crystal buckets.

In 1596 Raleigh wrote his *Discovery of the Large, Rich, and Beautiful Empire of Guiana, with a Relation of the Great and Golden City of Manoa*. This was an account of his own adventures in Manoa, and an attempt to persuade the people at home to send out colonists to live in that fair and rich land. His heart was set on winning for England the boundless wealth that he believed was to be found in Guiana, and he worked untiringly to induce other people to join in his plans, but up to the time of Elizabeth's death he had not been able to organize an expedition such as he desired. Then, soon after the accession of James, came the blow that put an end to his hopes. He was accused of having conspired with Lord Cobham against the King, was sentenced to death, and imprisoned in the Tower.

The death sentence was not carried out, but year after year the ardent, adventurous Raleigh, so full of plans for the good of his country and for his own glory, remained inactive behind prison walls. At first he could not believe that his imprisonment would last for more than a short time. He knew he was innocent, and each day he expected to hear that his innocence was proved, and he was free. Year after year went by, and he almost gave up hope, and turned to spend his energy on work that could be done within the confines of his prison. He was



not unkindly treated. He had a commodious lodging for himself, his wife, and his son. His friends were allowed to visit him; and in a little garden on which his rooms opened was a shed that he was allowed to use for chemical experiments.

He tried to fill his empty days with scientific work, with writing pamphlets and treatises, and with long conversations with his friends. One of these, who came often, was the young Prince Henry, son of James I. The boy had a great love and admiration for Raleigh, and he declared that no one but his father would keep such a bird in such a cage. He was a great comfort to Raleigh, who delighted in talking to the eager, intelligent lad. He wrote several treatises for Prince Henry's special benefit, and it was for him that his greatest work, the *History of the World*, was planned and begun.

It opened with an account of the Creation, and went on to the history of the Jews, the Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Romans. Raleigh told his story simply and easily, keeping in mind the main purpose of the book as he had set it out in his preface—to show God's judgment on the wicked—and these great words were the last:

O eloquent, just and mighty death! Whom none could advise, thou hast persuaded! What none have dared, thou has done! And whom all the world hath flattered, thou only hast cast out of the world and despised! Thou hast drawn together all the far-fetched greatness, all the pride, cruelty and ambition of men; and covered it all over with these two narrow words: *Hic jacet*.<sup>1</sup>

The first two books of the *History* were published in 1614, and became popular at once. For many years it was the most widely read of all books on history, and other historians modelled their work upon it. To-day we value it less for its matter than for its style; it is a beautiful example of simple, forceful Elizabethan prose.

The *History of the World* was never finished. In 1617 Raleigh was allowed to lead an expedition to the Orinoco, where he believed he could find a rich gold-mine. The expedition

<sup>1</sup> "Here lies"—the first words of the typical Latin epitaph.



failed, and he returned, heartbroken, to meet the anger of the disappointed James. In October 1618 he was beheaded. The night before his execution he wrote in his Bible his farewell to the world:

Even such is time, that takes in trust  
Our youth, our joys, our all we have,  
And pays us but with earth and dust;  
Who, in the dark and silent grave,  
When we have wandered all our ways,  
Shuts up the story of our days;  
But from this earth, this grave, this dust,  
My God shall raise me up, I trust.



---

## Chapter XX

### ANGLICAN AND PURITAN

MANY things be in the Utopian weal public which in our cities I may rather wish for, than hope after," Sir Thomas More had written at the end of his *Utopia*; and if he could have watched over the England he loved during the hundred years that followed the accession of Elizabeth he would have felt his hopes growing fainter and fainter. At first there did seem a chance that his great ideal might be reached, and that England might become a land where every man was free to worship God in his own way, without interference from his neighbour. The bitterness of the strife between Roman Catholics and Protestants was dying out, and devotion to the Queen was uniting Englishmen of both religions in a loyal company. But long before this union could become complete there was a break within the English Church itself, so that the prospect seemed even darker than before.

The English Church, as it had been established under Elizabeth, had won the love and reverence of the greater part of the nation. For them it was the true Church of Christ, that had cleansed itself from the errors of Rome. They loved its beautiful ritual, its ordered, seemly worship, its sacred priesthood, the glory of its stately buildings, and its treasures gathered through the ages. These people called themselves Anglicans out of loyalty to their Mother Church. But there were others who hated all that the Anglicans loved. These held that the Church of England had not gone nearly far enough in ridding herself of the things which hindered the pure worship of God. All forms and ceremonies, signs and symbols and ornaments, must go, the altar be turned into a plain table, the church into a building of four bare walls, and every man must be his own priest. These men gloried in the title of Puritans, for they held



that their work was to purify, not only the Church, but the whole life of man, from everything which, according to their stern creed, tended to hinder the exercise of true religion.

The Puritans were to be found chiefly in the towns among the tradespeople and craftsmen, though they included a good many of higher rank. The Anglicans were usually of families gently born and bred, the country gentlemen, the farmers, and the peasants who loved the old ways and hated change. The gallants of the Court were Anglicans—they who by and by were to be the reckless, brave, roystering Cavaliers of the King's army. They made fun of the Puritans for their cropped hair, their sour looks, their dismal garments, their hypocrisy, and their sanctimoniousness; and the Puritans sternly denounced them for their flowing locks, their silks and satins and jewels, their laughter and feasting and profligacy. And so the strife grew.

All through the reign of James I this division into parties became more and more marked, and when he died and his son Charles succeeded him there came a strengthening not a healing of differences. For Charles, unlike his father, had dignity and comeliness and the Stuart charm that could always win men's hearts. Personal loyalty, which seemed to have died with Elizabeth, sprang up once more, warm and passionate. Charles was devoted to the Church and his devotion strengthened that of his subjects. "For Church and King" became the cry of the Anglican party; and all through the troubles that followed it was "For Church and King" that they fought and died. But Charles had not the great gift that had belonged to Elizabeth of making loyalty to himself a means of uniting those among his subjects who disagreed on other points. The qualities that made the Anglicans love him brought him the stern condemnation of the Puritans. He was a man, they said, who cared more for the things of this world than for the things of God, and his Roman Catholic wife was a disgrace to Protestant England. They hardened their hearts against his wiles, as they called them,



and lived even more austere than before as a protest against what they considered the undue revelry and luxury of the Court.

So, as in all other times when there has been strife in the land, and especially when Englishman has striven against Englishman, there were few great and noble works produced during these years. Only here and there, in quiet country places where the noise of quarrelling did not come, were there true poets writing and dreaming. From the city and the Court came clever party pamphlets and brilliant, witty verse; but the Elizabethans had nearly all dropped away, and there was no one to take their places.

Nearly all the lighthearted young noblemen of the Court could, like their predecessors at the Court of Elizabeth, write verses in praise of their lady-loves or make a tuneful song about their own pleasures and pains. The songs they made are not equal to the songs of Shakespeare and Sidney and Greene and Raleigh and Campion and the rest of that great company, but they are spirited and graceful, and the gay, mocking tone of many of them is captivating. A few among them are true poems. There are the beautiful lines that nearly everybody knows, *To Lucasta, going to the Warres*, by Richard Lovelace, one of the handsomest and most gallant and most devoted of the King's subjects:

Tell me not, (sweet,) I am unkinde  
That from the nunnerie  
Of thy chaste breast and quiet minde  
To warre and armes I flie.

True: a new mistresse now I chase,  
The first foe in the field;  
And with a stronger faith imbrace  
A sword, a horse, a shield.

Yet this inconstancy is such,  
As you too shall adore;  
I could not love thee, dear, so much,  
Lov'd I not Honour more.

The *Ballad on a Wedding* by the witty and magnificent Sir John



Suckling is equally famous, but it is too long to be quoted here. We will take instead a shorter one of his:

Why so pale and wan, fond lover?  
 Prithee, why so pale?  
 Will, when looking well can't move her,  
 Looking ill prevail?  
 Prithee, why so pale?

Why so dull and mute, young sinner,  
 Prithee, why so mute?  
 Will, when speaking well can't win her,  
 Saying nothing do't?  
 Prithee, why so mute?

Quit, quit, for shame, this will not move,  
 This cannot take her;  
 If of herself she will not love,  
 Nothing can make her:  
 The devil take her!

These men, with many like them, made up the brilliant group of Court writers. To find the other Anglican poets we must leave London and visit quiet country households where well-born men and women were contentedly living their simple, pious lives in the service of God and of their fellow-men. At the rectory of Bemerton, in Wiltshire, the saintly George Herbert was writing his series of poems, *The Temple*. He belonged to the noble family of the Pembrokes, and he had high abilities, so that he might have become great and famous. But he let go ambition, and became an obscure parish priest.

I will labour [he said] to make the sacred name of Priest honourable by consecrating all my learning and all my poor abilities to advance the glory of that God that gave them; knowing that I can never do too much for Him, that hath done so much for me, as to make me a Christian. And I will labour to be like my Saviour by making humility lovely in the eyes of all men, and by following the merciful and meek example of my dear Jesus.

George Herbert was not strong in body, and the hard work of his parish soon wore him out, but for three years he lived among his flock, helping and serving them in every way he could. He was the friend of each one of them, and they learned



to love him as he loved them. Every day, at ten o'clock and at four, with his family and his servants, he came to the little church and joined in the public worship of God. Soon from the gentlemen's families round about, among whom the "holy Mr Herbert" was held in high esteem, came one and then another to join the little congregation; and "some of the meaner sort of his parish did so love and reverence Mr Herbert that they would let their plough rest when Mr Herbert's saints' bell rung to prayers, that they might also offer their devotions to God with him, and would then return back to their plough."

*The Temple* is a collection of a hundred and seventy poems each of which is about some part of the church building, or about Church services or teaching. First comes a long poem called *The Church Porch*, which tells how men must try to prepare themselves for full communion with God. It sets out plain duties in clear language, and has always been a favourite with ordinary, everyday people who like straightforward speaking better than pretty fancies. Yet it is not without beauty and dignity:

Lie not; but let thy heart be true to God,  
Thy mouth to it, thy actions to them both;  
Cowards tell lies, and those that fear the rod;  
The stormy working soul spits lies and froth.  
Dare to be true. Nothing can need a lie;  
A fault, which needs it most, grows two thereby.

Chase brave employments with a naked sword  
Throughout the world. Fool not; for all may have,  
If they dare try, a glorious life, or grave.

Pitch thy behaviour low, thy projects high;  
So shalt thou humble and magnanimous be.  
Sink not in spirit; who aimeth at the sky,  
Shoots higher much than he that means a tree.

In brief, acquit thee bravely, play the man.

These are some extracts from *The Church Porch*. The poems that follow are most of them short; there are poems on *Church Monuments*, *Church Music*, *The Church Lock and Key*, *The*



*Church Floor, The Church Windows.* In all of these the outward object is made to stand for some inward quality or feeling. In the chequered marble of the floor

that square and speckled stone,  
Which looks so firm and strong, is Patience,  
And the other, black and grave, wherewith each one  
Is chequered all along,  
Humility.

There are poems on all the seasons of the Church's year and on Holy Baptism and Holy Communion; and a number that deal with different duties and virtues. There is one which contains the well-known verse:

A servant with this clause  
Makes drudgery divine;  
Who sweeps a room, as for Thy laws,  
Makes that and the action fine.

And nearly all of us know that other one, on *Virtue*, which begins:

Sweet Day, so cool, so calm, so bright,  
The bridal of the earth and sky;  
The dew shall weep thy fall to-night;  
For thou must die.

*The Temple* was finished by the beginning of 1633, when George Herbert's life was drawing toward its end. "He died," says Izaak Walton, "like a saint unspotted of the world, full of alms-deeds, full of humility, and all the examples of a virtuous life." He was buried in his own church, under the altar.

The example of Herbert's saintly life had a greater force than any of his precepts. At the universities some of the most brilliant of the young scholars had given up all thought of worldly advancement, and had retired, like him, to quiet country homes, where they showed, as he had done, "what a fine gentleman, who was also a Christian and a Churchman, might be." There were poets among them—Richard Crashaw, Henry Vaughan, George Sandys, William Habington, and Francis Quarles—and the first two of these have a higher place than Herbert, though they wrote far less than he



did. Here are the first four verses of Henry Vaughan's beautiful poem *Friends Departed*:

They are all gone into the world of light!  
And I alone sit lingering here;  
Their very memory is fair and bright,  
And my sad thoughts doth clear.

It glows and glitters in my cloudy breast,  
Like stars upon some gloomy grove,  
Or those faint beams in which the hill is drest  
After the sun's remove.

I see them walking in an air of glory,  
Whose light doth trample on my days:  
My days which are at best but dull and hoary,  
Mere glimmering and decays.

O holy Hope! and high Humility,  
High as the heavens above!  
These are your walks, and you have shew'd them me,  
To kindle my cold love.

We will travel next down to South Devonshire, to the little parsonage house of Dean Prior, on the border of Dartmoor. Here, with no other companion but his servant-maid, Prudence Baldwin, lived Robert Herrick, the rector of the parish. We have seen him before when he was a young man living in London, and joining in the "lyric feasts" at the Devil Tavern as one of the "sons" of Ben Jonson. Somewhere about 1627 he had given up his former way of life and taken orders, and two years later the King had given him the living of Dean Prior; and here he lived for eighteen years, until he was turned out by the Long Parliament for refusing to subscribe to the Solemn League and Covenant.

Herrick was a rector of a type very different from that of George Herbert, and the poems that he wrote were very different from the poems of *The Temple*. He was an ardent Churchman and loyalist, but he had spent his youth in London, and had been much at the Court, and his early habits still clung to him. He was a big, jovial-looking man, with bright, dark eyes and thick, curling black hair. He loved merry-making and gay company, and at first he was very sad at



leaving London for a lonely life in the "loathed west," but he did his duty, and made an active, kindly parish priest. He did not labour for the spiritual welfare of his people with the zeal of the saintly George Herbert, but he helped them in their troubles, and preached them quaint, homely sermons, and went to all their weddings and junketings, where everybody was the merrier for his being there. His house was small and old and shabby, but he lived in it contentedly, and thanked God for giving him

A little house, whose humble roof  
Is waterproof. . . .  
Like as my parlour, so my hall  
And kitchen's small,  
A little buttery and therein  
A little bin,  
Which keeps my little loaf of bread  
Unchipt, unflead.<sup>1</sup>

He grew to love the country, and made beautiful poems about the flowers and the trees and the birds, and about his parishioners and their joys and sorrows. When he saw the primroses, bent down under bright drops of dew, he wrote:

Why do you weep, sweet babes? can tears  
Speak grief in you,  
Who were but borne  
Just as the modest morne  
Teem'd her refreshing dew? . . .

Speak, whimp'ring younglings, and make known  
The reason why  
Ye droop and weep:  
Is it for want of sleep,  
Or childish lullabie?  
Or that you have not seen as yet  
The violet?

Another beautiful poem is *To Violets*:

Welcome, maids of honour,  
You doe bring  
In the Spring:  
And wait upon her.

<sup>1</sup> undamaged.



She has virgins many,  
Fresh and faire;  
Yet you are  
More sweet than any.

Y' are the maiden posies,  
And so grac't  
To be plac't  
'Fore damask roses.

Yet though thus respected,  
By and by  
Ye doe lie,  
Poore girles, neglected.

On the fresh spring mornings Herrick rose while the birds were still singing their "thankfull hymnes," and when the morning came on which "the budding boys and girls" went out to bring in May he was there too, and saw them come, "with whitethorn laden, home." He walked with them through the village, where

Each field turns a street; each street a park  
Made green and trimmed with trees; see how  
Devotion gives each house a bough,  
Or branch; each porch, each doore, ere this,  
An arke, a tabernacle is,  
Made up of whitethorn neatly interwove.

Doubtless, too, he went with them to the feast of "tarts and custards, creams and cakes," that was given later on.

He made merry rhymes warning the maids of his parish against sloth and sluttishness:

If ye will with Mab find grace,  
Set each platter in his place;  
Rake the fier up, and get  
Water in, ere sun be set,  
Wash your pailles and clense your dairies:  
Sluts are loathsome to the fairies;  
Sweep your house: who doth not so,  
Mab will pinch her by the toe.

He made sweet songs for them to sing—songs so tuneful that we sing them still:

Cherrie-ripe, ripe, ripe I cry,  
Full and faire ones; come, and buy:



If so be, you ask me where  
They doe grow? I answer, There,  
Where my Julia's lips do smile:  
There's the land, or Cherry-ile:  
Whose plantations fully show  
All the yeere, where cherries grow.

If any strict and solemn Puritan ever happened to find his way to peaceful and remote Dean Prior, he probably found little encouragement to remain, for it would have been difficult to convince the parishioners of this genial, mirth-loving rector that to eat mince-pies at Christmas was sinful, and that to dance round the maypole showed an unregenerate heart. They might have answered him in Herrick's own words, which they probably knew, for although his poems had not then been printed they were freely passed about in manuscript:

Come, let us go while we are in our prime,  
And take the harmless folly of the time.

When the evening came Herrick went home to his little parlour, where the "brittle sticks of thorn or brier" made his fire. We can think of him sitting beside it, with no sound to disturb him save "a choir of singing crickets": the "green-eyed kitling" sat by his side, on the watch for the "brisk mouse" that might be tempted from its hole by the unbroken quiet. Then all sorts of lovely fancies came into his head, and he took his pen and put them into a poem. Sometimes it was addressed to an imaginary lady—and Herrick could turn a love-song as prettily as any courtier—some Corinna, or Anthea, or Julia of his fancy. Sometimes his thoughts took a graver turn, and he mused on the things belonging to religion and holiness. In such a mood he wrote his famous *Litany*:

In the hour of my distress,  
When temptations me oppress,  
And when I my sins confess,  
Sweet Spirit, comfort me.

When I lie within my bed,  
Sick in heart and sick in head,  
And with doubts discomforted,  
Sweet Spirit, comfort me.



He wrote also a little *Grace for a Child*:

Here a little child I stand,  
Heaving up my either hand:  
Cold as paddocks though they be,  
Here I lift them up to thee,  
For a benison to fall  
On our meat, and on our all. AMEN.

In 1647 Herrick was forced to give up the post he had held so long. He went to London, and there occupied himself in collecting and arranging his poems. In 1648, the year before the King's execution, they were published. No one took very much notice of them; everyone was thinking of sterner things than flowers and sunshine and merrymakings. Herrick must have been bitterly disappointed, though he too had a deeper sorrow in the death of the King he loved. How he spent the next fourteen years we do not know, but he could not have been very happy. He was lonely and growing old, and probably poor; so that when in 1662 Charles II gave him back his living of Dean Prior he must have been very glad to return to the kindly West Country. He lived there peacefully for twelve years, and died in 1674.

Michael Drayton, who was born a year before Shakespeare, was still writing poems during the reigns of James I and Charles I. One of these, written about 1623, is a very pretty fairy story called *Nymphidia*, telling, in mock-heroic style, of the adventures of Oberon and Titania and the fairy knight Pigwiggen. Drayton describes how Pigwiggen arms himself to fight against Oberon:

And quickly arms him for the field,  
A little cockle-shell his shield,  
Which he could very bravely wield,  
Yet it could not be pierced:  
His spear a bent both stiff and strong,  
And well near of two inches long;  
The pile was of a horsefly's tongue,  
Whose sharpness nought reversed.

And put him on a coat of mail,  
Which was of a fish's scale,



That when the foe should him assail,  
 No point should be prevailing.  
 His rapier was a hornet's sting,  
 It was a very dangerous thing:  
 For if he chanc'd to hurt the King,  
 It would be long in healing.

His helmet was a beetle's head,  
 Most horrible and full of dread,  
 That able was to strike one dead,  
 Yet it did well become him:  
 And for a plume a horse's hair,  
 Which being tossed by the air,  
 Had force to strike his foe with fear,  
 And turn his weapon from him.

Himself he on an earwig set,  
 Yet scarce he on his back could get,  
 So oft and high he did curvet  
 Ere he himself could settle:  
 He made him turn, and stop, and bound,  
 To gallop and to trot the round,  
 He scarce could stand on any ground,  
 He was so full of mettle.

As for the Puritans, there is very little to be said about their literature under the first two Stuart kings. For most of them there was only one book worthy of study by a Christian man, and that book was the Bible. Every man and woman of their community who could read studied the Bible with passionate intensity. By it, or by their interpretation of it, they strictly ordered their lives; on it they founded their system of government; through it they explained all difficulties and answered all questions. They took their children's names from its pages, they shaped their speech in imitation of its language. They loved to meet together to expound and interpret certain passages, and to build up their doctrine upon its precepts. Rich and poor, learned and unlearned, were alike in their devotion to the Bible; Oliver Cromwell, we are told, read scarcely anything else.

Yet there were to be found among the Puritans some who loved poetry and music and the beautiful things of life, and were not afraid to allow themselves the delight of reading fine



verses, or even of making them, if they were able to do so. Colonel Hutchinson (who was one of those who signed the death warrant of King Charles) was a Puritan of this class. His wife, in her *Memoirs of Colonel Hutchinson*, which tells us so much about the manners of the time, says that he loved "gravings, sculpture, and all liberal arts," and "had a great love for music, and often diverted himself with a viol, on which he played masterly." John Milton, scrivener, of Bread Street, London, was of the same temper. In the homes of Puritans such as these was no harshness or austerity, only simplicity and true devotion, with a readiness to enjoy the good things that God had given them. The best kind of Anglican and the best kind of Puritan were very near together in many things, though by and by they were to strive against one another in a deadly quarrel. But in the years that came before the outbreak of the Civil War there were still some who were able to keep bitterness out of their daily lives, and go on steadily with the work they had to do.

A year or two after George Herbert went to Bemerton and Robert Herrick went to Dean Prior, John Milton, the younger, left Christ's College, Cambridge, and came to live at his father's country house at Horton, Buckinghamshire. He had been noted at the university for his good looks—they had called him "the lady of Christ's" because of his bright, curling hair, his blue eyes, and fair skin—for his learning, and for his indocility and resistance to college authorities, which had, at least once, brought him into serious trouble. He came very gladly to Horton, and his father, who believed that his son had in him the making of a great man, willingly allowed him to spend five quiet years studying, meditating, and writing in the peaceful solitude of the country. In these happy conditions the young poet wrote his first works—his two delightful country poems, *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*; his elegy, *Lycidas*; and the masques *Arcades* and *Comus*. None of these has anything of the stern Puritan temper. Even *Il Penseroso*, which is the study of a thoughtful, retired life, is full of quiet



delight in the beautiful things of the world; and there could not be a sunnier poem than *L'Allegro*, which describes the life of a man who is cheerful and light-hearted.

Come, thou Goddess fair and free,  
In Heaven yclept Euphrosyne,  
And by men heart-easing Mirth. . . .  
Haste thee, Nymph, and bring with thee  
Jest and youthful Jollity,  
Quips and cranks and wanton wiles,  
Nods and becks and wreathed smiles,  
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,  
And love to live in dimple sleek;  
Sport that wrinkled Care derides,  
And Laughter holding both his sides. . . .  
To hear the lark begin his flight,  
And, singing, startle the dull night,  
From his watch-tower in the skies,  
Till the dappled dawn doth rise,  
Then to come, in spite of sorrow,  
And at my window bid good-morrow,  
Through the sweet-briar, or the vine,  
Or the twisted eglantine;  
While the cock, with lively din,  
Scatters the rear of darkness thin;  
And to the stack, or the barn-door,  
Stoutly struts his dames before.

It is a lovely poem, full of high imagination and beauty, and English boys and girls should know most of it, and of *Il Penseroso*, by heart.

At the end of five years spent at Horton John Milton started on a Continental tour. He visited Paris, Nice, Genoa, Florence, Rome, and Naples, and met the most eminent men of learning in all those cities. When the Civil War broke out in England he came home to bear his part. For many years he wrote no more poetry. Like many another poet among his countrymen, he gave all his energies to the strife that was tearing the nation asunder. England had come to a dark place in her history, and literature, with other precious things, was for a time lost in the gloom.



---

## Chapter XXI

### ENGLAND'S EPIC

**A**N epic, the dictionary tells us, is "a narrative poem describing in elevated style the achievements of some hero." If we look back from the point we have now reached over the history of our English literature we can find no work that can really claim this title. *Beowulf* is almost an epic, but it is scarcely on a large enough scale. It is not a complete story, but tells only of two disconnected incidents in the life of the hero. Some of Hakluyt's tales are epic in subject and in spirit, but they are told in prose. The Elizabethan writers, who produced dramatic and lyric poetry so freely, did not attempt an epic. For this England had to wait until the Civil War was over and the eleven years of the Commonwealth had ended in the restoration of the Stuart line of kings.

It was not an age that might have been expected to produce an heroic poem. The people, in their relief at being freed from the strict Puritan rule that had taken so much of the joy out of everyday life, rushed to the opposite extreme. They did all the things that the Puritans had forbidden them to do. They feasted and revelled and drank, they crowded to the theatres and the taverns, they spent their money on fine clothes and luxuries of every kind. They mocked at morality and even at decency; to lead a life as far as possible removed from the life they had been forced to lead under the Commonwealth was regarded as a sign of loyalty to the King. In all this excess and indulgence Charles II led the way. He was good-natured and easy-tempered, very clever in playing off one group of politicians against another, and too lazy to be very cruel; but his friends were wild and graceless men and women, and he thought more of his own ease and pleasure than of duty, honour, or the interest of England.



Yet it was not really the whole nation, nor even, perhaps, the greater part of it, that was affected by the new spirit. The Puritans remained, though their numbers had dwindled sadly; and all over the country there were devout Anglicans and simple country-folk living their peaceful, busy lives, and, loyal as they were, shuddering at the rumours that reached them from time to time of the wicked doings of the Court. It was in London and in the large towns and in the great houses of the nobles that this licence was seen at its worst, and since these places drew the most notice they gave the character to the whole nation.

It was in this unheroic age, in the midst of a city given up to idle pleasures and ignoble excitements, that a blind man, grown old before his time, sat down in his small house in an obscure London street to write the greatest epic poem that had been written since the age of Homer. He was hardly to be recognized as the John Milton of twenty or thirty years before—the bright-haired young man with the beautiful face who had lived so happily at Horton preparing himself for the great work that he felt he was called upon to do. The Civil War had broken in upon his life and scattered all his plans. He had taken up the cause of the Puritans with fiery zeal, and all through the troubled years that followed he had fought as fiercely as any soldier among them, though with brain and pen instead of with hand and sword. He had written pamphlet after pamphlet in support of the Parliamentary party. He had abused their enemies with a savage coarseness that it is grievous to think of as coming from the man who had written *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*. He had thrown mud, and mud had been thrown back at him. When the Commonwealth had been established he had become Latin Secretary to the Council of State, and then the strife in which he was engaged had grown even fiercer. For years his eyes had been failing; by 1650 the sight of the left one had altogether gone. The doctor warned him that only perfect rest could save the other. But rest was just what Milton would not give it. He had to choose



between losing his eyesight and leaving what he believed to be his duty undone, and he did not hesitate. He says:

I considered with myself that many had purchased less good with worse ill, as they who give their lives to reap only glory, and I thereupon concluded to employ the little remaining eyesight I was to enjoy in doing this, the greatest service to the common weal it was in my power to render.

So he went on writing his pamphlets until the sight of both eyes was gone, and we cannot help thinking as we read some of these that it was a high price to pay for such works. There are many great and noble passages in them, as there must be in any writings of John Milton, but we should be loath to exchange *L'Allegro* or *Lycidas* for all the political pamphlets of those twenty years.

In his home life Milton had not been happy. In 1643 he had married Mary Powell, the daughter of a Royalist Oxfordshire squire. She was a girl of seventeen who had been used to the active, stirring life of a big household, with plenty of young and cheerful society, and she was miserable in her quiet London home, with no one to talk to but a husband who took no interest in her pursuits, as she took none in his. At the end of the first month she begged that she might pay a visit to her father's home, and, once there, she would not come back. Milton was left alone, until, in 1645, the Royalist defeats had ruined his wife's father and placed the whole family in danger. Then she came to him and begged for his protection, and generously he gave it. They lived together in the London house for the next seven years, until, in 1652, Mary Milton died, leaving her husband with three little daughters, the eldest six years of age. In 1656 he married Catherine Woodcock, but she died fifteen months later, and again he was left alone. His father, his best and most understanding friend, had died in 1646.

Then, in 1660, came the Restoration. Milton was arrested, with other Puritans, but was soon released. He lost all his money, which was invested in securities of the Commonwealth Govern-



them to trouble further about him;

them to trouble further about him, and he was left alone.

... and the ...

And Jesus, the King of God to men,

time in the center, most on the front

---8-- enclosed above and original



Out of this Chaos God shaped our universe. He gave it form and light, He made the heavens and separated the waters from the dry land. He clothed the earth with grass and trees, He set the sun and moon and stars in the heavens, He made the beasts and the fowls and the fishes, and last of all He made man, and set Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. In six days the work was finished, and then God fastened His new-made world safely by a gold chain to Heaven. He made also a staircase,

Ascending by degrees magnificent  
Up to the wall of Heaven,

and at the top placed

a kingly palace gate,  
With frontispiece of diamond and gold  
Embellished.

Thus man was made, happy and innocent. But he was not to remain so. There was war in Heaven. Satan with all his host of rebel angels strove to make himself equal with the Most High, and he, with them, was driven out, and fell during

Nine times the space that measures day and night,

until he reached the fiery lake of Hell. There he and his followers lay silent and overcome, until Satan roused himself and spoke to Beelzebub, the rebel next himself in power. He is fallen, he says, but not dismayed, and he will never cease to war against the High God Who has overthrown him. This resolution he keeps, and the rest of *Paradise Lost* tells how he strove against God, and how, through him, sin and suffering entered into the world that God had made.

Satan is the hero of Milton's epic, and he is wonderfully drawn. The writers of the Middle Ages pictured the Evil One as a grotesque creature with horns and hoofs. Even Marlowe's Mephistophilis has something of this character. But Milton's Satan is very different. We have a picture of him after he has struggled from the fiery lake and gained the solid land, has marshalled his legions around him, and is about to speak to them.



He, above the rest  
In shape and gesture proudly eminent,  
Stood like a tow'r; his form had yet not lost  
All her original brightness, nor appeared  
Less than Archangel ruined. . . .

His face  
Deep scars of thunder had intrenched, and care  
Sat on his faded cheek, but under brows  
Of dauntless courage, and considerate pride  
Waiting revenge; cruel his eye, but cast  
Signs of remorse and passion to behold  
The fellows of his crime, the followers rather,  
Far other once beheld in bliss, condemned  
For ever now to have their lot in pain. . . .

He now prepared  
To speak; whereat their doubled ranks they bend  
From wing to wing, and half enclose him round  
With all his peers; attention held them mute.  
Thrice he assayed, and thrice, in spite of scorn,  
Tears, such as angels weep, burst forth; at last  
Words interwove with sighs found out their way.

Then he tries to encourage them, and to stir them up to continue the war against Heaven. They must consult together, he says, as to what can be done,

"For this infernal pit shall never hold  
Celestial spirits in bondage. . . .  
Peace is despaired;  
For who can think submission? War, then war,  
Open or understood, must be resolved."

So he speaks, and the flaming swords of his warriors flash out and make a blaze that lights up the darkness of Hell. On a hill near by they hasten to erect a palace, and soon it stands, strong and magnificent and richly ornamented. Then Satan seats himself on a throne of royal state within it and a council is held. It is decided that it is useless to attempt another battle against the forces of Heaven, but that they can better attack God through the creatures of the new-made world, of which they have heard various rumours. Satan offers to adventure out through Chaos to seek this world. He passes the gates of Hell, and after many adventures and trials he reaches a place from which it may be seen.



God, looking down from Heaven, sees Satan approaching the world, but will not stop him, since He has given man free will and he must meet temptation. He knows that man will fall, and God the Son offers Himself as a Saviour to redeem his sin.

Satan at length reaches the earth and comes in sight of the Garden of Eden.

A circling row  
Of goodliest trees loaden with fairest fruit,  
Blossoms and fruits at once, of golden hue  
Appeared, with gay enamelled colours mixed,

and in the midst stands

the Tree of Life,  
High eminent, blooming ambrosial fruit  
Of vegetable gold; and next to Life  
Our death, the Tree of Knowledge, grew fast by. . . .  
Southward through Eden went a river large.

This divided into four main streams and watered the garden, where grew "flow'rs worthy of Paradise." There were "groves whose rich trees wept odorous gums and balm," and others "whose fruit, burnished with golden rind, hung amiable." Between these there were "lawns or level downs and flocks grazing the tender herb," and valleys where were "flow'rs of all hue, and without thorn the rose." There were cool grotts and shady caves "o'er which the mantling vine lays forth her purple grape," and there were murmuring waters, and tuneful birds, and airs "breathing the smell of field and grove." In this beautiful place Satan sees "all kind of living creatures, new to sight and strange," and among them

Two of far nobler shape, erect and tall,  
Godlike erect, with native honour clad  
In naked majesty, seemed lords of all,  
And worthy seemed; for in their looks divine  
The image of their glorious Maker shone.

Milton goes on to tell the story of the temptation and the fall of man, as we read it in the Book of Genesis, adding many imaginary incidents in which archangels from Heaven



take part. So he comes to the last scene, where Adam and Eve are driven out of Paradise before the flaming sword.

They looking back all th' eastern side beheld  
Of Paradise, so late their happy seat,  
Waved over by that flaming brand, the gate  
With dreadful faces thronged and fiery arms:  
Some natural tears they dropped, but wiped them soon;  
The world was all before them, where to choose  
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide.  
They, hand in hand, with wandering steps and slow,  
Through Eden took their solitary way.

It took Milton three years of really hard labour to write the first draft of *Paradise Lost*. He was, we must remember, a blind man, and he could not work without help from someone who could see. His daughters, now growing up, might have helped him, but they had had a poor education, and took little interest in his work. It was difficult to find suitable paid helpers; few had enough intelligence and sympathy to be of any use. Fortunately he found friends outside his own household. His nephew, Edward Phillips, says:

He had daily about him one or other to read to him; some persons of man's estate, who of their own accord greedily catch'd at the opportunity of being his reader, that they might as well reap the benefit of what they read to him, as oblige him by the benefit of their reading; others of younger years sent by their parents to the same end.

Soon after *Paradise Lost* was finished Milton married for the third time. His wife was a capable, kindly woman, who managed his household well, and as far as she could shielded him from cares and worries. He could work better now, and by 1665 he had revised the whole poem, so that it was ready for publication. Then came the dreadful plague year, followed by the Great Fire, and so the poem was not published until 1667. It found at first only a few readers, and some of those read it only to ridicule it. But it made its way steadily though slowly; thirteen hundred copies were sold in the first eighteen months. Dryden praised it heartily. It has never been widely popular, but poetry lovers in all ages have seen in it a noble and



splendid poem full of wonderful music and fine images; and they have given Milton a place among English poets second only to Shakespeare.

The remaining years of the poet's life were calm and peaceful. He wrote two other great poems, *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*, which are of the same high temper as *Paradise Lost*, and as full of fine harmonies. His habits were simple and regular. He rose at four or five, and with some friend worked during the morning. The afternoon was given to rest and recreation. In the evening, from six to eight, he talked to his friends, and at nine he smoked a pipe and went to bed. Visitors have told how they found him sitting in the sunshine at the door of his house clad in a "grey, coarse cloth coat," his hands, swollen with gout, resting on his knees, his eyes shining "with an unclouded light just like the eyes of one whose vision is perfect." He grew gradually weaker, and on November 8, 1674, just a month before his sixty-sixth birthday, he died "with so little pain that the time of his expiring was not perceived by those in the room."



---

## *Chapter XXII*

### THE LITERATURE OF THE RESTORATION PERIOD

#### I. THE DIARISTS AND THE POETS

RESTORATION ladies and gentlemen were as little fitted to appreciate Milton as they were to appreciate Shakespeare and the other Elizabethans. There was, indeed, not much in our earlier literature that pleased them. They thought most of it dull and old-fashioned, and almost as uninteresting as the long, dreary sermons of the Puritans. When they read a book or went to a play they did not want to have their imaginations touched or their feelings stirred, they wanted to be amused; and it was not very easy to amuse them, for they were, most of them, clever, worldly-wise people who were as little moved by simple, wholesome humour as they were by mere absurdity and clowning. They were pleased only by books and plays that were witty and brilliant, and above all in the fashion of the day—the fashion that had come in with Charles II.

We know a good deal about the manners and the way of life of these fine folk of the Restoration, chiefly because there were two men living at the time who kept very full and interesting diaries. The first of these was John Evelyn, a rich Royalist gentleman belonging to an old Surrey family. He was forty years old at the time of the Restoration, and was living at Sayes Court, Deptford. He held various public offices, but he did not care for the gaieties of the Court, preferring to occupy himself in work for the good of his country, in writing his learned books, and in studying in his fine library. The second diarist was Samuel Pepys. He was twelve years younger than Evelyn, and had no fortune except what he could win for himself by his quick wits and his hard work.



When Charles II returned to England Pepys was twenty-eight years old, and held the post of Clerk of the Acts, at a salary of £350 a year, with a house at the Navy Office, Seething Lane. He was clever and ambitious, and he rose quickly, until he became a moderately wealthy man, and gradually he pushed his way into a society very much higher than that into which he had been born. He and his beautiful wife went about everywhere, to plays and public shows and concerts and festivities of all kinds. Pepys had scholarly tastes, too, and was a fellow of the newly founded Royal Society; and at the meetings of this society he met John Evelyn, and the two soon became friends. He knew, at least by sight, almost every famous person in London, and he wrote about them in his diary most entertainingly.

Neither of these diaries was made public until many years after the writer of it was dead. Evelyn's was kept in the library of his Surrey house at Wotton until 1818, when it was edited and published. Pepys, when he died, left his fine collection of books to Magdalene College, Cambridge, and among them were six manuscript volumes, written in a sort of shorthand, which had been carefully preserved but not very closely examined. Some references to Samuel Pepys in Evelyn's diary reminded the authorities of the college of these mysterious books. They were brought out, and after much puzzling a key to the cipher in which they were written was found. An expert in writings of this kind undertook to translate them, and after working at them for nearly three years, usually for twelve or fourteen hours a day, he produced a complete version, the greater part of which was published in 1825.

So now we have these two full and interesting accounts to help us in studying a very important period of English history. Evelyn's diary tells of the years from 1631 to 1706. It is a grave and scholarly account of public events, of the author's family life, and of the books he has written. Pepys' tells only of a little more than nine years, 1659 to 1669, but it is much longer because it is so very much fuller. It is one of the most



entertaining books that have ever been written. We do not know whether he meant anyone besides himself to see it; some people think he did, and some think he did not. He kept it carefully hidden, and he does not seem to have spoken of it to anyone; he wrote it in cipher, and he put into it things that were so much to his own discredit that we can scarcely believe that he would have been willing that other people should know of them. But we are very glad indeed that the diary came to light, for it is a most delightful document, as well as a most useful one. Pepys tells us all the trifling details of his daily life: what he had for dinner, and how much he enjoyed it; what fine clothes he bought for himself, and how proud he was when he wore them; how he sometimes quarrelled with his wife, and how jealous he was of her because she was so young—seven years younger than himself—and so pretty; how he cuffed his servants when they displeased him, and sometimes even kicked them, and how ashamed he felt afterward. He tells also about the fine people that he met, and all the gossip of the town: who was high in the King's favour, and who was disgraced; who was going to be married; and who was the most beautiful of all the ladies at a grand Court ball. He loved books and he loved music, and he has a great deal to say about both of these. He liked to pass an hour or two in his bookseller's shop, where poets and playwrights and men of fashion used to gather to discuss the newest publications and the news of the day; and, best of all, he loved the theatre, where he went very often—too often, he sometimes felt, because of the time and the money he was wasting. His diary is full of the plays he has seen and the actors and actresses he has met, and he is very outspoken as to what he liked and what he thought good for nothing.

Pepys begins his diary with an account of the restoration of Charles II and of the rejoicings that followed it; and he tells how various poets wrote "Panegyriques" celebrating the return of the King. These were read and praised by everyone, for all were eager to show their loyalty. The most notable of



them, called *Astræa Redux*, was by John Dryden, who was to be the most famous poet of the reign, though at that time he was little known. He was about thirty years old, and had left Cambridge in 1657. He had written a poem on the death of Oliver Cromwell in 1659, in which he had highly praised the great Lord Protector; but now he turned to the new ruler, and wrote quite as eloquently in praise of Charles II. *Astræa Redux* is a fine poem, and it brought Dryden fame and royal favour. It pays the King many graceful compliments, as in the pretty line about his birthday month, May—"You and the flowers are its peculiar care." Dryden did not, for a time, follow it up with another poem. He turned to the stage, and we shall talk about his plays a little later.

Two years later came a poem called *Hudibras*, which exactly suited the taste of the time, and was received with the greatest delight by London society and especially by the King, who gave its author, Samuel Butler, a present of three hundred pounds in acknowledgment of the pleasure it had given him. Butler was an ardent Royalist, and he wrote this poem to bring the Puritans into ridicule. It tells how a Puritan knight, Hudibras—fat, humpbacked, his hose stuffed with provisions, his sword rusty, his dagger only fit for scraping pots and toasting cheese—rode out in search of adventures, attended by Ralpho, his squire, who is a more ridiculous figure even than his master. Their aim is to put down the sports that the people love, and soon they come upon a bear-baiting. A grand battle takes place between the knight and squire and the bear-baiters—a fiddler, a bear-leader, a tinker, a locksmith, a cobbler, and an ostler. This is described in high-flown terms, as if it were a real, serious battle between two great armies. At first the knight is successful, and manages to put one of his enemies in the stocks; but the others gather themselves together and make another attack, and this time they are the conquerors. Ralpho takes his turn in the stocks, from which he delivers a long discourse on his particular religious belief; and here the first part of the poem ends. It is full of quips and jests at the



expense of the Puritans, and we can imagine with what enjoyment the triumphant Royalists read such lines as these, describing their old enemies:

Such as do build their faith upon  
The holy text of pike and gun;  
Decide all controversies by  
Infallible artillery;  
And prove their doctrine orthodox  
With apostolic blows and knocks;  
Call fire and sword and desolation  
A godly, thorough Reformation. . . .  
Quarrel with mince-pies and disparage  
Their best and dearest friend, plum-porridge;  
Fat pig and goose itself oppose  
And blaspheme custard through the nose.

A second part of the poem, continuing the story, was published the next year, and was as popular as the first. Samuel Pepys felt quite uncomfortable because he did not like *Hudibras*. He could not bear to be out of the fashion, and he was ashamed to let anyone know that he could not appreciate the wit which all the town was enjoying so mightily.

Dryden's *Annus Mirabilis*—"The Wonderful Year"—which came in 1666, was received almost as enthusiastically as *Hudibras*. It told of the two great events of that year—the Dutch War and the Great Fire. The finest part is that which describes how the fire began and spread:

Such was the rise of this prodigious fire,  
Which, in mean buildings first obscurely bred,  
From thence did soon to open streets aspire,  
And straight to palaces and temples spread.

The diligence of trades, and noise of gain,  
And luxury, more late, asleep were laid;  
All was the Night's, and in her silent reign  
No sound the rest of Nature did invade.

In this deep quiet, from what source unknown,  
Those seeds of fire their fatal birth disclose;  
And first few scattering sparks about were blown,  
Big with the flames that to our ruin rose.

Then in some close-pent room it crept along,  
And, smouldering as it went, in silence fed;  
Till the infant monster, with devouring strong,  
Walked boldly upright with exalted head.



The poet tells how, the winds helping it, it leapt from house to house, and he imagines how the ghosts of the traitors whose heads had been placed high over London Bridge came down and joined in a witches' dance of joy at the destruction of the city. On went the fire, and soon the alarm spread, and the streets were filled with frightened citizens, all doing what they could to stop its course. But all was in vain, and the fire sped on, and, widening as it went, wrapped whole streets in its flames. With the morning came the King to see the damage that had been done, and as he heard the cries of his subjects the pious tears showered down his cheeks:

He wept the flames of what he loved so well,  
And what so well had merited his love;  
For never prince in grace did more excel,  
Or royal city more in duty strove.

Pepys too gives a vivid account of the fire, though he did not see it, except from the window of his house, until the next morning:

So I made myself ready presently, and walked to the Tower; and there got up upon one of the high places, Sir J. Robinson's little son going up with me; and there I did see the houses at that end of the bridge all on fire, and an infinite great fire on this and the other side the end of the bridge. . . . So down, with my heart full of trouble, to the Lieutenant of the Tower, who tells me that it begun this morning in the King's baker's house in Pudding-lane, and that it hath burned down St Magnus's Church and most part of Fish Street already. So I down to the water-side and there got a boat, and through bridge, and there saw a lamentable fire. . . . Every body endeavouring to remove their goods, and flinging into the river, or bringing them into lighters that lay off; poor people staying in their houses as long as till the very fire touched them, and then running into boats, or clambering from one pair of stairs, by the water-side, to another. And, among other things, the poor pigeons I perceived were loth to leave their houses, but hovered about the windows and balconys, till they burned their wings, and fell down.

After he had looked on at this fearful sight for some time, and had seen the high wind drive the fire toward the city, "I to White Hall," says Pepys,



. . . and there up to the King's closet in the Chapel, where people come about me, and I did give them an account dismayed them all, and word was carried in to the King. So I was called for, and did tell the King and Duke of York what I saw; and that, unless his Majesty did command houses to be pulled down, nothing could stop the fire. They seemed much troubled, and the King commanded me to go to my Lord Mayor from him, and command him to spare no houses, but to pull down before the fire every way.

So off went Pepys in a coach, and

at last met my Lord Mayor in Canning Street, like a man spent, with a hankercher about his neck. To the King's message, he cried, like a fainting woman, "Lord! what can I do? I am spent; people will not obey me. I have been pulling down houses; but the fire overtakes us faster than we can do it." . . . For himself, he must go and refresh himself, having been up all night. So he left me, and I him, and walked home; seeing people all almost distracted, and no manner of means used to quench the fire.

It is a pity that none of Pepys' fellow-citizens had a chance of reading his account of the Great Fire, for its vivid pictures would have pleased them. They read *Annus Mirabilis*, and it added something to Dryden's fame, but by this time he was a well-known dramatist, and his plays were more highly thought of than his poems. There was nothing that the fashionable society of London liked so well as the play, and we must go back now and see what has been doing in the theatre since we left it when Ben Jonson and the later Elizabethans had written the last of their plays.

## II. THE PLAYWRIGHTS

In September 1642 Parliament had ordered the closing of all theatres, and from that time until Charles II came back there were only a few more or less secret performances, upon which the Puritan soldiers might, and sometimes did, break in, roughly dispersing the audience. Londoners, even many who were favourable to the Parliamentary rule, had submitted unwillingly to this order, and had felt sore and resentful at the loss of their favourite amusement. As soon as Charles II was



established on the throne there were petitions that the theatres might be reopened. The King willingly gave his consent, and two companies of actors were quickly formed. One company played at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, and for the second a new theatre was built in Lincoln's Inn Fields.

The next thing was to find the plays; and for a time the audiences had to be content with those written by the older dramatists. The plays of Ben Jonson and the later Elizabethans were fairly well received. Samuel Pepys thought *The Alchemist* "a most incomparable play"; he liked Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Mad Lover* "pretty well," but their *Knight of the Burning Pestle* "pleased me not at all." Shakespeare and the earlier dramatists were regarded as being quite out of fashion. Pepys thought *Romeo and Juliet* "the worst that ever I heard," *Twelfth Night* "a silly play, not relating at all to the name or day," and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* "the most insipid, ridiculous play that ever I saw in my life." Evelyn wrote in his diary: "I saw *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, played, but now the old plays begin to disgust this refined age, since his Majesty's being so long abroad."

The Restoration writers did what they could to fit the works of Shakespeare and the other Elizabethans to the taste of the times. Sir William Davenant took parts of *Measure for Measure* and *Much Ado about Nothing* and put them together to make a play which he called *The Law against Lovers*. Pepys saw it and pronounced it "a good play and well performed." Davenant also rewrote *Romeo and Juliet* as a comedy, and, with Dryden, he rewrote *The Tempest*, introducing some new characters, and spoiling and vulgarizing the whole play. But, even with these alterations, the old plays were not what the Restoration audiences wanted. Only writers of their own day could supply them with the kind of play that really suited them; and soon the new plays began to appear and drove the older ones quite off the stage.

One of the first was *The Wild Gallant* (1663), written by John Dryden; and he followed this with many other comedies and



tragedies. Soon there was a company of playwrights producing play after play to meet the demand. Many of them were rich and fashionable young gentlemen, such as Sir George Etherege, Sir Charles Sedley, and William Wycherley. The plays that they wrote were for the most part pictures of the fashionable life of the day. The characters were fine ladies and gentlemen, very much like the fine ladies and gentlemen in the audience. They talked to each other so brilliantly that plain people could scarcely follow them; almost every line in the plays sparkled with wit. There was nothing lofty or heroic about these plays, and nothing to stir the feelings very deeply. Most of them were comedies; the tragedies were not so successful.

All fashionable London crowded to the theatre. The King himself went often, and all the Court followed his example, and filled the boxes and the pit. Their coachmen and footmen filled the galleries, so that the London merchants, with their journeymen and apprentices, who had made up a large part of the audience in the days of Elizabeth, could now hardly find places. After a time they gave up trying to do so, for the glittering assembly, with its extravagant dress and costly jewels, its loud voices, shrill laughter, and free manners, seemed to take possession of the theatre, so that less fashionable folks felt themselves out of place. Most of the London citizens had kept to the older and soberer ways of the days before King Charles, and they did not care for the plays that pleased these others. They thought them immoral, as well as uninteresting, and so they gave up coming to the theatre, until by and by, as we shall see, it was their turn again, and plays were written to suit them, and not to suit fashionable society.

### III. "ABSALOM AND ACHITOPHEL"

As the reign of Charles II went on serious and unpleasant matters began to force themselves upon the notice of the gay and thoughtless society of the town. Its members had run away



from the Plague and from the consequences of the Great Fire, and they had cared little for the disasters of the Dutch War; but in 1678 there came a great disturbance which they could not altogether escape.

Discontent had been for some time spreading among the people. It was said openly that the King, like his brother the Duke of York, was a Roman Catholic. He had done several things to favour those who held that religion, and the people watched him suspiciously. It was believed that the Roman Catholics in the country were becoming dangerously powerful, and when, in 1678, Titus Oates, a disgraced clergyman, pretended to discover a plot to murder Charles and put his brother on the throne, nearly everyone believed him. A panic followed. People who were perfectly innocent were charged with having planned all sorts of terrible crimes, and there was little chance of their being able to make the terrified and excited juries believe that the charge was false. Large numbers of loyal and peaceable Roman Catholics were sentenced to horrible tortures and a shameful death. The few people who kept their heads could do nothing against the frenzy of the rest. Titus Oates was rewarded and praised as the saviour of his country, and others, as worthless as he, made haste to take the same easy way to riches and public favour. The cry of "No Popery" sounded all over England.

While the excitement was at its highest Lord Shaftesbury, a restless and ambitious politician, introduced into Parliament in 1679 a Bill to prevent the Roman Catholic Duke of York succeeding to the throne when his brother died. Charles at once dissolved Parliament, and so prevented the Bill from becoming law. The angry Shaftesbury and his supporters did their best to rouse the people to still greater frenzy. New stories of atrocities planned by Roman Catholics were sworn to by men bribed to bear false witness. The Duke of Monmouth, an illegitimate son of Charles II, who was young and handsome and very popular with the common people, was proclaimed as the Protestant champion and the heir to the



throne, and was paraded through the London streets, where frantic crowds gathered to greet him as their future king.

Here was trouble and danger for the Court party, from which all their riches and all their selfishness could not help them to escape. Their dependence was on the King; if he fell, they fell; and they thought of what had happened to his father when he opposed the people's will, and shuddered. They were forced to look fearfully out beyond their own gay, pleasant world, which seemed now in danger of breaking up, and to concern themselves with what was going on outside.

Fortunately for them the tide at length turned. The people sickened at the horrors they had helped to bring about, and grew ashamed of what they had done. As their excitement died down they saw how flimsy and ridiculous was the evidence in which they had believed, and how worthless the men who had given it. King Charles took advantage of this change of temper among the people, and caused Shaftesbury to be impeached on a charge of procuring false witnesses. Excitement rose again, for Shaftesbury was regarded by all Protestants as their champion. London especially was devoted to him, and his trial threw the whole city into a state of angry alarm.

In November 1681, just a week before Shaftesbury's trial, there appeared a poem called *Absalom and Achitophel*, by John Dryden. It is said that Charles suggested to Dryden that he should write a poem which would help to turn popular opinion against Shaftesbury and his cause. Whether this was so or not we do not know, but the poem is certainly a bitter attack upon the King's opponents, and it did give great help to the Court party. It was written hastily, that it might appear at the right time, but it is the finest piece of work that Dryden ever did, and the greatest satirical poem in our language.

*Absalom and Achitophel* is founded on the account of Absalom's rebellion against King David given in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth chapters of the Second Book of Samuel. David stands for King Charles II, Absalom for the Duke of



Monmouth, and Achitophel for Shaftesbury. It was well known that Charles loved his rebellious son, and Dryden is careful all through his poem to treat the young man with tenderness, and to keep all his bitter attacks for those who had turned him against his father. His good qualities are extravagantly praised:

Whate'er he did was done with so much ease,  
In him alone 'twas natural to please;  
His motions all accompanied with grace,  
And Paradise was opened in his face.

For a time all went well, and

Praised and loved the noble youth remained,  
While David undisturbed in Zion reigned.

But soon the people grew discontented. The Jews (that is, the English),

A headstrong, moody, murmuring race  
As ever tried the extent and stretch of grace  
Began to dream they wanted liberty.

A plot was formed, for

Plots, true or false, are necessary things,  
To raise up commonwealths and ruin kings.

The movers in the plot were the Jebusites (Roman Catholics), and, though it failed, it had a "deep and dangerous consequence":

Several factions from this first ferment  
Work up to foam and threat the government.

Discontented men everywhere seized the opportunity of turning upon the monarch, whose "fatal mercy" had in many cases pardoned those who had shown themselves to be his enemies, and had even raised some of them to "power and public office high." Then comes a description of Achitophel:

Of these the false Achitophel was first,  
A name to all succeeding ages curst:  
For close designs and crooked counsels fit,  
Sagacious, bold, and turbulent of wit,  
Restless, unfixed in principles and place,  
In power unpleased, impatient of disgrace;  
A fiery soul, which, working out its way,  
Fretted the pigmy body to decay



And o'er-informed the tenement of clay.  
 A daring pilot in extremity;  
 Pleased with the danger, when the waves went high  
 He sought the storms; but for a calm unfit,  
 Would steer too nigh the sands to boast his wit. . . .  
 In friendship false, implacable in hate,  
 Resolved to ruin or to rule the state.

This dangerous and unscrupulous man looked round to find someone he could set up in opposition to King David, and "none was found so fit as warlike Absalom." So Achitophel set to work to please and flatter the young man, and make him long for his father's crown. At first Absalom refused to think of raising a rebellion—"What pretence have I to take up arms for public liberty?" he asked. But the artful Achitophel persevered and at length Absalom was won over. Then the leader began to gather together all the discontented people in the country. There was the "Solymæan rout," as Dryden disdainfully called the city rabble, where Shaftesbury found his chief supporters. There was Zimri, who stood for the Duke of Buckingham:

A man so various that he seemed to be  
 Not one, but all mankind's epitome;  
 Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong,  
 Was everything by starts, and nothing long;  
 But in the course of one revolving moon  
 Was chymist, fiddler, statesman, and buffoon.

After him came Shimei, or Slingsby Bethel, a Sheriff of London and a noted Republican:

When two or three were gathered to declaim  
 Against the monarch of Jerusalem,  
 Shimei was always in the midst of them.

Then Corah, or Titus Oates:

His memory, miraculously great,  
 Could plots exceeding man's belief repeat;  
 Which therefore cannot be accounted lies,  
 For human wit could never such devise.

Led by these false friends, Absalom raised the standard of rebellion:

Now what relief can righteous David bring?  
 How fatal 'tis to be too good a king!



Then follow the names of those who were faithful to the King in his time of trouble. Barzillai (the Duke of Ormond), "crowned with honour and with years," and Hushai (Laurence Hyde), who "joined experience to his native truth," were the chief of these. The poem ends with a speech by David, threatening his enemies with the vengeance they have provoked. "The conclusion of the story," wrote Dryden in his note "To the Reader,"

I purposely forbore to prosecute, because I could not obtain from myself to show Absalom unfortunate. . . . Were I the inventor, who am only the historian, I should certainly conclude the piece with the reconciliation of Absalom to David. And who knows but this may come to pass?

The poem made a great sensation, and the Court party read it with delight. It did not secure the conviction of Shaftesbury. London remained faithful to him, and the Grand Jury threw out the bill of indictment. But it greatly strengthened the King's cause and weakened the opposition. Enormous numbers of it were sold, and Dryden rose to the height of his fame.

In 1682 came the second part of *Absalom and Achitophel*, of which Dryden wrote only about two hundred lines, "besides some touches in other places." The rest was by an inferior poet, Nahum Tate.

Dryden wrote two more great poems, *Religio Laici* (1682) and *The Hind and the Panther* (1687), besides some fine elegies and odes. *Absalom and Achitophel* had made him a noted man, and he held a place among men of letters such as Ben Jonson had held before him. His headquarters were at Will's Coffee-house, Covent Garden. Here from his armchair, which was placed near the fire in winter, and on the balcony in summer, he talked with the crowd of wits and gallants that gathered round him. Mr Pepys had seen him there in his early days. He had looked into Will's Coffee-house one evening,

where I never was before, where were Dryden (the poet I knew at Cambridge) and all the wits of the town, and Harris the player,



and Mr Hoole of our College. And had I had time then, or could at other times, it will be good coming thither, for there, I perceive, is very witty and pleasant discourse.

The Revolution of 1688 took away the pensions and places that Dryden had received from Charles II, and left him, though not poor, yet with an income that would not give him his accustomed comforts. He tried playwriting again, but was not very successful. He translated some classical works, and translated Chaucer into modern English. He died on April 30, 1700.

### IV. "THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS"

To anyone living in the midst of London Society during the years that followed the Restoration it must have seemed as if England was going from bad to worse, and that very soon there would be neither religion nor morality left in the land. But this was not really so. Doubtless the example of the Court had an evil influence on many people, but there were many others whom it did not reach; and there were many who, having joined at first in the wild outburst that came with the return of Charles II, had afterward grown ashamed of their excesses, and had gone back to a more sober and a better way of life. The riotous, godless company that gathered round the King attracted the most attention, but the old England was still there, and religion was still a power in the land, though it was despised in high places. How truly religious the nation in general was can be seen by what happened on St Bartholomew's Day, 1662. Nearly two thousand rectors and vicars, or about a fifth of the English clergy, left their parishes because they could not, in conscience, agree to the new Act of Uniformity passed by Parliament. To most of them this meant poverty, to many it meant something very near starvation, yet they did not hesitate. The people to whom they had ministered, and who were as zealous for the truth as they, did their best to provide them with a living, though at best it was a bare one; and many secret services were held, though every



member of the congregation knew that a harsh punishment waited for him if the King's officers found out what was going on.

There were many godly households to be found all over England where the old writers were still honoured, where the works of the Restoration dramatists had never entered, and where the books most often read and most dearly loved were—after the Bible—the *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying* of Bishop Jeremy Taylor and *The Saints' Everlasting Rest* of Mr Richard Baxter. There were humbler households where no books were to be seen except the Bible and one or two Puritan tracts, which were held in high reverence. All the children's books of the time were either about exemplary children who led lives of extraordinary piety, and who always died young, or else about thoughtless children who forgot God and went after the pleasures of the world, and, in consequence, came to most terrible ends. There was a book written by James Janeway called *A Token for Children, being an Account of the Conversion, Holy and Exemplary Lives, and Joyful Deaths of Several Young Children*, which was extremely popular. Parents bought it for their children, and exhorted them to follow the examples thus set before them. They bought them also Thomas White's *Little Book for Little Children*, which was full of warnings of what would happen to boys and girls who committed even slight faults: "Sleep not in church, for the Devil rocks the cradle"; "Be not proud of thy clothes nor curious in putting them on, for the Devil holds the glass"; "Fight not with play-fellows, for the Devil will be thy second." The parents hoped that by means of these books they might prevent their children being harmed by the ungodliness that was affecting so terribly certain classes of the people; and to some extent they succeeded, although they made religion a thing to be feared instead of loved.

We will leave London and look at one of those quiet country places where news from the Court came only as vague, terrifying rumours. We will choose the little Bedfordshire village of



Elstow, because there was, at the time of the Restoration, a man living there who was to become famous in the history of our literature. It was only a small village, but it had a church, and a rector who preached good rousing sermons that touched the consciences of some at least among his hearers. On Sundays two services were held, and between them there were games and dancing on the green. There was a free school at Bedford, close by, where the children of poor parents could learn to read and write. Some of the Elstow people belonged to one or other of the new religious sects that had been formed; there must have been quite a considerable number of those who were called Baptists in the neighbourhood, for in the later years of the Commonwealth a Baptist chapel had been built at Bedford, and a certain Mr Gifford established there as pastor. One of the most highly thought of among the members of the chapel was a man named John Bunyan. He was only a poor tinker, but his life was so exemplary, and he had such a wonderful gift of preaching and exhortation, that all his fellow-members looked up to him almost with reverence.

John Bunyan's history was well known in Elstow, and he himself talked of it freely. His father before him had been a tinker, and he had been brought up in Elstow and sent to the Bedford free school, where he was taught to read and write, though he soon forgot most of what he had learned. He was an idle, careless lad, and loved sports better than more serious things, but there were times when his conscience showed him his idleness and carelessness as the blackest of sins, and then fits of terror took hold of him. "When I was but a child nine or ten years old," he said, "these things did so distress my soul that in the midst of my merry sports and childish vanities and vain companions I was often much cast down and afflicted in my mind therewith; yet could I not let go my sins." He loved bell-ringing and playing hockey and other "vain sports." He was eager to read romances and ballads, but he cared nothing for the Scriptures. He was given to profane speaking



and swearing until he was cured of this once and for all by the rebuke of an old woman in the open street.

Then came the Civil War, when Bedfordshire was one of the districts under the command of the Parliamentary Army, and Bunyan was called up with the other youths to fight. In 1647 he was discharged, and he came back to Elstow a youth of nineteen, ignorant and careless still, and ready to go on in the old way. He took up his trade as a tinker, and a few months later he married. "My mercy," he said,

was to light upon a wife whose father was counted godly. This woman and I, though we came together as poor as might be, not having so much household stuff as a dish or spoon between us both, yet this she had for her part, *The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven* and *The Practice of Piety*, which her father had left her when he died.

Bunyan's wife helped him to read these two books, and told him stories of her father, who had lived "a strict and holy life both in words and deeds."

Wherefore these books, with the relation, though they did not reach my heart to awaken it about my sad and sinful state, yet they did beget within me some desires to reform my vicious life and fall in very eagerly with the religion of the times, to wit, to go to church twice a day and that, too, with the foremost.

But he found that going to church did not help him, and he could get little comfort from reading his Bible. For years he lived in terror of the wrath of God. One by one he gave up the things that he loved, but which he believed to be sinful, but even that did not give him peace.

I was tossed between the devil and my own ignorance, and so perplexed, especially at some times, that I could not tell what to do. . . . Thus I continued for a time all on flame to be converted to Jesus Christ. . . . I was more loathsome in mine own eyes than a toad, and I thought I was so in God's eyes too.

At last peace came to him, and he felt all the joys of conversion. He turned to the Bible once more, and "began to look into it with new eyes, and read as I never did before." In 1653 he joined the Baptist church at Bedford, and began to help the pastor at the prayer-meetings and in the visiting of



the sick. He was made a deacon, and soon he discovered that he had a gift for preaching. Then, still working hard at his trade as a tinker, he spent all the time he could spare in going through the villages near Bedford, holding meetings and teaching and preaching.

He had been doing this for some years when the Restoration came, and when, a few months later, the laws against unlicensed preachers were put into force Bunyan was among the first to suffer. In November 1660 he was arrested for preaching at a farmhouse, and was sent to Bedford Gaol. He might have been released if he would have confessed that he had done wrong and promised to preach no more, but he would not do this, and so he remained in prison for twelve years.

His wife was left penniless, and Bunyan must do his best to support her and his children, so he worked hard at making bootlaces, which they took away and sold. The rest of his time he spent in preaching and praying with the other prisoners, and in writing. He had already written several religious tracts, and now he set himself to tell the story of his own life, that it might be a help to others who were troubled as he had been troubled. He called this book *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, and in it he gave a very full account of his sins and his repentance, his temptations and his falls, and the mercy of God that had at last brought him to peace.

Another book that he wrote in prison was called *The Holy City, or The New Jerusalem*. He and the other prisoners who were suffering, as he was, for the sake of their religion took it in turns to preach a sermon on Sunday mornings, and one week, when it was his turn, he was thinking over what he should say. As he turned over the pages of his Bible he came to the chapter in the book of the Revelation in which the city of God is described, "with her light like as to a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone, clear as crystal." "Me-thought I perceived something of that jasper in whose light this holy city is said to come or descend." So by God's help he



was able to set this great hope before his brethren, "and we did all eat and were well refreshed."

When he was once more by himself the vision came to him again; and the more he looked, the more wonderful it seemed, and at length he began to write down a description of what he saw. He wrote simply and plainly, without thinking whether he was writing well or ill, but only anxious to describe exactly the splendours of the heavenly kingdom, as God had allowed him to see them. Thus the poor tinker, who had had no education except some instruction in reading and writing, and had read no books save the Bible and a few books of devotion, was preparing himself to write the great work that was to stand beside the *Paradise Lost* of Milton, the scholar, as a masterpiece of Puritan literature.

In 1672 Bunyan, with others who had been imprisoned for unlawful preaching, was released. The King, by his royal authority, had pardoned these offenders by a declaration known as the Declaration of Indulgence. At once the members of the Baptist church at Bedford chose Bunyan for their pastor, and he worked there quietly for three years. Then the Declaration of Indulgence was withdrawn, and he was once more thrown into prison; and it was then that he began to write *The Pilgrim's Progress from this World to that which is to come*.

The story tells of what the writer saw in a dream. Thus it begins: "As I walked through the wilderness of this world I lighted on a certain place where was a Den, and I laid me down in that place to sleep; and, as I slept, I dreamed a dream." In this dream he saw a man who bore upon his back a heavy burden, and who wept and seemed to be in sore trouble through something which he read from a book which he held in his hand. The man went home to his house, and after a time he told his wife and his friends of the cause of his distress.

I am for certain informed that this our city will be burnt with fire from heaven; in which fearful overthrow, both myself, with thee, my wife, and you, my sweet babes, shall miserably come to ruin,



except (the which yet I see not) some way of escape may be found, whereby we may be delivered.

All who heard him thought that his brain was disordered, and that after a night's rest he would think differently; but next morning it was just the same, and so it went on for many days. Then they tried harshness and mockery, but still the man persisted in his tale; and Bunyan in his dream saw him as, day after day, he wandered about the fields reading in his book and crying, "What shall I do to be saved?"

One day a man named Evangelist came to him as he walked and gave him counsel, and bade him fly from the city toward a wicket-gate that he showed him, and knock there, and he should be told what to do. The man began to run, and when his wife and his children called to him he put his fingers in his ears and ran the faster. The neighbours also came out, and two of them, named Obstinate and Pliable, ran after him to bring him back by force. But he would not come, and Obstinate turned back, but Pliable resolved to go on with the man, who was now to be called Christian. So they walked on together, and soon

they drew near to a very miry slough, that was in the midst of the plain; and they, being heedless, did both suddenly fall into the bog. The name of the slough was Despond. Here, therefore, they wallowed for a time, being grievously bedaubed with the dirt; and Christian, because of the burden that was on his back, began to sink in the mire.

Then Pliable grew angry and reproached Christian, and when, after desperate struggles, he managed to get out he set off back to his home as fast as he could go. Then a man whose name was Help came up, and gave his hand to Christian, and drew him out and set him on his way.

So Bunyan goes on to tell how Christian journeyed on, and passed through dangers and trials and temptations, with much weariness and suffering, and how at last he reached the Celestial City. It is a fine story, full of deep meaning, and setting out clearly and fully the religious doctrines held by the



sect to which Bunyan belonged. But it can be read, as *The Faerie Queene* can be read, simply as a story. Many generations of children have read it and have been fascinated by the clear vividness of Bunyan's descriptions. It all seems so real that many a child has imagined himself to be Christian and has seen himself knocking at the wicket-gate, feeling his burden tumbling off his back, passing the lions in the way, resting in the House Beautiful, fighting with the foul fiend Apollyon, lying for four days in the dungeon of Doubting Castle, wandering upon the Delectable Mountains, and at last entering the shining gate of the King's Palace. Many delightful games have been made out of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and little children have trudged out sturdily with their bundles on their backs, struggled through imaginary Sloughs of Despond, and fought with a hideous, roaring Apollyon, who had wings like a dragon, feet like a bear, and a mouth like a lion. Later these children saw more than a story in this wise and beautiful book, and read it with a reverence that was all the deeper through the memory of the delight it had been to them in earlier days.

From Bunyan's own day to the days of your grandfathers and grandmothers this went on, and then there came a change. *The Pilgrim's Progress* began to fall out of favour with children. Your fathers and mothers, probably, thought little of it; you yourselves, perhaps, have never read it. It is sad that this should be so, for there is not one among all the stories written for the fortunate children of to-day that can take the place of this brave old book. Let me tell you about one of Christian's adventures, in the hope that it may make you want to read of others for yourself.

Christian was travelling with another pilgrim named Hopeful, whom he had met on the way. They had come to a very dangerous place in the road, and had tried to cross a river; but they had found it so dangerous that half-way over they had turned to go back, "but it was so dark, and the flood was so high, that in going back they had like to have been drowned nine or ten times."



Wherefore, at last, lighting under a little shelter, they sat down there until the day-break; but, being weary, they fell asleep. Now there was not far from the place where they lay, a castle called Doubting Castle, the owner whereof was Giant Despair; and it was in his grounds they now were sleeping; wherefore he, getting up in the morning early, and walking up and down in his fields, caught Christian and Hopeful asleep in his grounds. Then, with a grim and surly voice, he bid them awake; and asked them whence they were, and what they did in his grounds. They told him they were pilgrims, and that they had lost their way. Then said the giant: "You have this night trespassed on me by trampling in, and lying on, my grounds, and therefore you must go along with me." So they were forced to go, because he was stronger than they. They also had but little to say, for they knew themselves in a fault. The giant therefore drove them before him and put them into his castle, into a very dark dungeon, nasty and stinking to the spirits of these two men. Here, then, they lay from Wednesday morning to Saturday night, without one bit of bread, or drop of drink, or light, or any to ask how they did.

Meantime, Giant Despair and his wife, Diffidence, consulted together as to what should be done with the prisoners, and his wife urged him to beat them without mercy. So on Thursday morning the giant arose and

getteth him a grievous crab-tree cudgel, and goes down into the dungeon to them, and there first falls to rating of them as if they were dogs, although they gave him never a word of distaste. Then he falls upon them, and beats them fearfully, in such sort that they were not able to help themselves, or to turn them upon the floor. This done, he withdraws and leaves them, there to condole their misery, and to mourn under their distress.

That night the giant's wife advised her husband to try to persuade the prisoners to kill themselves. So in the morning he went in a surly manner and told them that

since they were never like to come out of that place, their only way would be forthwith to make an end of themselves, either with knife, halter or poison; "for why," said he, "should you choose to live seeing it is attended with so much bitterness?" But they desired him to let them go. With that he looked ugly upon them, and, rushing to them, had doubtless made an end of them himself, but that he fell down into one of his fits (for he sometimes, in sunshiny weather, fell into fits), and lost for a time the use of his hand; wherefore he withdrew, and left them as before to consider what to do.



Christian was so miserable that he was almost inclined to do as the giant suggested, but Hopeful encouraged him, and in the evening Despair came again. When he found that they were still alive he fell into a grievous rage, so that they trembled, but still they were resolved not to take their own lives. That night the giant again asked his wife what was to be done with the prisoners, and she advised him to take them into the castle-yard and show them the bones and skulls of those who had already perished in the castle, and to tell them that before another week was over they should be torn to pieces, as those, their fellows, had been.

So next morning he took them into the castle-yard and showed them the bones and skulls. "These," said he, "were pilgrims, as you are, once, and they trespassed in my grounds, as you have done; and when I thought fit I tore them in pieces; and so, within ten days, I will do you. Go, get you down to your den again."

When the giant talked again to his wife and told how he could by no means bring the prisoners to destroy themselves, "I fear," said she, "that they live in hope that some will come to relieve them; or that they have picklocks about them, by the means of which they hope to escape." "And sayest thou so, my dear?" said the giant. "I will therefore search them in the morning."

But that same morning,

a little before it was day, good Christian, as one half amazed, brake out into this passionate speech: "What a fool," quoth he, "am I, thus to lie in a stinking dungeon, when I may as well walk at liberty! I have a key in my bosom, called Promise, that will, I am persuaded, open any lock in Doubting Castle." "Then," said Hopeful, "that is good news, good brother; pluck it out of thy bosom, and try."

Then Christian pulled it out of his bosom, and began to try at the dungeon door, whose bolt (as he turned the key) gave back, and the door flew open with ease, and Christian and Hopeful both came out. Then he went to the outward door that leads into the castle-yard, and with his key opened that door also. After, he went to the iron gate, for that must be opened too; but that lock went desperately hard, yet the key did open it.



Then they thrust open the gate to make their escape with speed; but that gate as it opened made such a creaking, that it waked Giant Despair, who, hastily rising to pursue his prisoners, felt his limbs to fail, for his fits took him again, so that he could by no means go after them. Then they went on, and came to the King's highway, and so were safe because they were out of his jurisdiction.

Bunyan's second term of imprisonment lasted for only six months, and after that he lived for twelve years peaceably and quietly at Bedford. He revised the book he had written in prison, and added fresh incidents and characters. In 1680 he published *The Life and Death of Mr Badman*, which is a kind of reverse of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, showing how an unconverted man went on his way through life, getting farther and farther from the heavenly kingdom. In 1685 appeared the second part of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which describes how Christian's wife and her four children followed her husband to the Heavenly City, but this is not nearly as good as Part I.

Bunyan died in 1688, a few months before the Prince of Orange landed in England. He was riding from Reading to London when a storm came on, and before he could find shelter he was wet through. He reached the house of one of his London friends, and there, ten days later, he died. He was buried in the famous burying-ground of the Dissenters in Bunhill Fields.



---

## *Chapter XXIII*

### THE LONDON OF THE LATER STUARTS

#### I. THE CITIZENS

**C**HARLES II's reign came to an end, and there followed three stormy years under the rule of James II; then came the Revolution and the accession of William and Mary in 1688. During this time there were many changes among the people of London. The brilliant, dissolute company that had gathered round Charles II had been broken up. Some of its members had taken up the Jacobite cause, and of these many were in exile with James; some had lost most of their money and were living quietly on their country estates; while others had married the sons or daughters of rich London merchants, and were content to rank as citizens.

Few writers came to Court, for there was nothing now to attract them. Neither William nor Mary cared much about literature. The King was a foreigner and unpopular. He was absorbed in State matters, and had no gift of winning his subjects' hearts. His Dutch followers were as serious and stiff-mannered as he was. The Court was decorous and dull—as different as it could well be from the Court of Charles II.

The citizens had been steadily increasing in riches and importance. We have seen how they held aloof from the Court in the reign of Charles, and so saved themselves from acquiring the fashionable vices; but at the same time they had lost the opportunity of gaining the outer polish which contact with people of a higher rank might have given them. Some of the most successful among the city merchants remained ignorant and uncultivated, coarse in their speech, displeasing in their habits, and with no idea how to live with simplicity and dignity, as the rich London citizens of earlier days had



done. They had enough of the Puritan religion of their fathers and their grandfathers to give them a mistrust of magnificence, and even of beauty, but not enough to keep them from ignoble self-indulgence. Many of them were uneasily conscious that their way of life was poor and unlovely, and longed vaguely for better things.

Some advance they had made, and were making. The newly established coffee-houses had helped them, for in these public places it had become the fashion for men to gather evening after evening to drink coffee and hear the news and discuss with one another the questions of the day. In such gatherings there must be some care for manners and decorum; no man must do anything that would be offensive to his neighbour. He must be careful that his dress, his language, and his habits were up to the general standard, and the standard was naturally set by the more refined of the company.

Newspapers were read at the coffee-houses as well as at home, and these too had, in some sort, a refining influence, though the political abuse that sometimes filled them was by no means edifying. There was little else for the ordinary citizen to read after he had finished *The Pilgrim's Progress* and the few poems of Dryden that appealed to him. He wanted a special literature that would meet his own personal needs; he wanted a teacher who would show him how to make the best of his circumstances and his opportunities; and the teacher was long in coming.

When he did come he was at first not recognized as a teacher at all, and most people would have laughed had such a claim been made for him. His name was Richard Steele, and he was a captain in the Guards—a wild, handsome, lovable, spendthrift young Irishman. He drank and he gambled, he brawled in taverns, he joined in the riotous amusements of the wild town gallants. He had little money, for his father, an Irish attorney, had disinherited him, but he lived extravagantly, and so was always in debt. There were many among the London citizens whose lives were far less blameworthy



than was his; but none of them saw the vision that shone always before him—the vision of what a man's life ought to be, and could be if he followed what he knew was the highest. Poor weak-willed Dick Steele, always falling and always repenting, had yet a deep sense of religion, and an almost passionate love of what was good and beautiful, and he had made for himself an ideal of what a noble Christian gentleman should be. He had great sympathy and kindliness, and, mixing freely with the London citizens, he came to understand a good deal about their difficulties. It was partly, perhaps, through a sense of his own shortcomings, and partly because he felt that he could help these others, that he wrote, in the last year of the reign of William III, a little book that he called *The Christian Hero*.

The true hero must, he argued, be a Christian. All the great men of heathen times—Cato, Cæsar, Brutus, Cassius—found that there was nothing in their philosophy to support them when their need was sorest, but Christians had learned that they had that within them that would help and guide them even in their greatest difficulties—a conscience. Man went astray when he began to depend, not on his conscience, but on the opinion of the world around him; and when the standard of the people among whom he lived was low or evil he could not escape contamination.

“We are framed,” says Steele,

for mutual Kindness, good Will and Service, and therefore our Blessed Saviour has been pleased to give us (as a reiterated Abridgment of all his Law) the Command of Loving one another; and the Man that Imbibes that noble Principle is in no danger of Transgressing against his Fellow Creatures, but he will certainly use all the Advantages which he has from Nature and Fortune to the Good and Welfare of others, for whose Benefit (next to the Adoration of his Maker) he knows he was Created. . . . Nay, if we follow the best Friendship we meet with to its source, and allow it to be what it sometimes really is, a passionate Inclination to serve another without hopes or visible Possibility of receiving a return, yet we must also allow that there is a deep Interest to ourselves (tho' indeed a Beautiful one) in satisfying that Inclina-



tion; but that good Intention is subject to be chang'd and interrupted (as perhaps it was taken up) by Accident, Mistake, or turn of Humour; but he that loves others for the Love of God must be unchangeable, for the Cause of His Benevolence to us is so.

Serious people read the book and praised it. The wild young men who were Steele's companions ridiculed it, and gibed at the author because of the difference between his own life and that of the Christian gentleman he had held up as a model. The book lost him, Steele says, some of his popularity. The class that he had specially wished to benefit—the prosperous tradesmen of the city, who had no ideals of their own, and who, he had hoped, might be attracted by his—scarcely noticed it. They knew little about the old Roman heroes, and were not interested in them, and they did not see how the book would help them in the difficulties of their everyday lives.

Steele was perhaps a little discouraged, but the idea of a crusade against the ugliness and coarseness of London life had taken hold of him, and he tried again. He considered the possibilities of the playhouse. The brilliant audiences of the days of Charles II had vanished, and the citizens were coming back to fill some of the empty places. But they did not like the Restoration plays, which were all that, for some time, the managers of the theatres had to give them. The managers did their best. They searched about for old plays that might please the taste of the citizen audience, and they found some new ones. Yet still they had not found just the kind of play that was wanted, and it was this that gave Steele his opportunity.

He resolved to write a play in which the characters should be, not worldly, dissipated ladies and gentlemen, but homely, virtuous people, very much like the citizens themselves. Virtue should be shown as lovely and victorious, and vice should be made hideous, and should receive, at the end of the play, the punishment that it deserved. His humbler heroines should have the grace and charm of the high-born ladies of the Restoration comedies, but without their immodesty; his heroes



should be as gallant and fine-mannered as any nobleman, but their lives should be upright and pure.

He began at once with *The Funeral, or Grief à la Mode*, and followed this with *The Lying Lover* (1703) and *The Tender Husband* (1705). He had not been very successful in carrying out his idea. His mind had been so full of the purpose of the plays that he had let the moral overwhelm the interest, and he had been so determined not to be brilliant and heartless that he had become wordy and sentimental instead. Yet the public received the plays eagerly, and large audiences shed floods of tears over them night after night. Steele had set a new fashion. Other writers followed his example, and sentimental comedy became the rage.

The plays did not bring about such a change in manners as Steele had hoped for. Doubtless they gave some of the citizens a new ideal, but this was not firm or manly enough to be of much use. They made Steele famous, and they brought him in a large sum of money, which, however, he soon spent. Seventeen years later, in 1722, he wrote another play, called *The Conscious Lovers*, which is of the same kind as the earlier ones, but better constructed and more interesting in its plot. It is about two worthy London merchants who plan a marriage between the son of the one and the daughter of the other; but the young people have other views, and there are many misunderstandings and heartrending disappointments and floods of tears before the two young people pair off with the lovers of their choice. There are some very pretty scenes showing how Tom, the hero's servant, courted Phillis, the heroine's maid, and these have a touch of humour such as is not often found in Steele's dramatic writings.

*Tom.* It was on the 1st of April, 1715, I came into Mr Sealand's service. I was then a hobbledohoy, and you a pretty little tight girl, a favourite handmaid of the household. At that time we neither of us knew what was in us. I remember I was ordered to get out of the window, one pair of stairs, to rub the sashes clean; the person employed on the inner side was your charming self, whom I had never seen before.



*Phillis.* I think I remember the silly accident. What made ye, you oaf, ready to fall down into the street?

*Tom.* You know not, I warrant you. You could not guess what surprised me. You took no delight when you immediately grew wanton in your conquest, and put your lips close, and breathed upon the glass, and when my lips approached, a dirty cloth you rubbed against my face, and hid your beauteous form. . . . Oh, Phillis, you don't know how many china cups and glasses my passion for you has made me break. You have broke my fortune, as well as my heart.

But there is not very much about Tom and Phillis, and we soon come back to the tears and distresses of their betters. The end of the play brings its moral. "Now, ladies and gentlemen," says one of the merchants,

"you have set the world a fair example; your happiness is owing to your constancy and merit; and the several difficulties you have struggled with evidently show

"Whate'er the generous mind itself denies  
The secret care of Providence supplies."

Newspapers and books and plays were gradually educating and refining the citizens of London, but the literature which had the strongest influence in doing this was yet to come. We will speak of it in the next section.

## II. THE COFFEE-HOUSES

By the end of the reign of William III the coffee-houses had come to hold a really important place in the life of the London citizen. They were not only helping to improve his manners, but they were giving him a taste for intellectual pleasures. He was beginning to take an interest in ideas, and to enjoy a talk, over his cup of coffee, on subjects that were not connected with his daily business. His desire to know more about other matters, besides those connected with money-making, increased, and when he found at the coffee-house someone better informed than himself he listened eagerly to what was said.

It was a pity that the newspapers of the day did not give him more help, but it was a time when party feeling was very



strong, and both *The Flying Post*, which was on the Whig side, and *The Post Boy*, which was Tory, were too much occupied with abusing their opponents to have much space for general news or comment. There was a very active journalist writing at this time, Daniel Defoe, who had once been a merchant in Cornhill, and then had been the head of a tile factory. He wrote pamphlet after pamphlet on the affairs of the day, and for one of them, written in 1703, he was imprisoned and fined and condemned to stand three times in the pillory. When he came out of Newgate in 1704 he started a newspaper, which he called *The Review*, and which came out three times a week. It professed to belong to no party, but to be moderate and impartial, and it did discuss subjects of general interest in a manner different from those of the other papers. Daniel Defoe was a vigorous, lively writer who could make almost any subject attractive. In all the coffee-houses there was a great demand for *The Review*, and a great deal of eager discussion about its articles.

It was clear to Richard Steele as well as to others that the newspapers were doing something of what he had hoped to do to help the citizens of London. But they were not doing all, or nearly all, that might be done through the coffee-houses. Steele determined to start a new paper planned expressly for the benefit of coffee-house readers. He believed that such a paper might have a great influence for good, and might besides bring him in the money he sorely needed, for he was in debt again, although he had married a rich heiress, and although he held the appointment of editor to the official news-sheet, *The London Gazette*, issued by the Government. This position gave him a great advantage over other newspaper editors, because all the official news, home and foreign, came direct to him.

So he went to work with great enthusiasm, and in April 1709 was ready with his first number. He had considered carefully what he could do to give his paper a good start and to attract readers, and he had hit upon the idea of taking the



name of Isaac Bickerstaff. The name was well known in London, for about a year before Jonathan Swift (a writer of whom we shall speak a little later) had signed it to an attack that he had made on the almanac-makers. These almanac-makers pretended to be able to foretell, by all sorts of signs and tokens, the events of the coming year, and a good many people had great faith in them, and firmly believed that the disasters and the triumphs that they predicted would come to pass. Their impostures grew, and their influence over weak-minded people became really harmful, so witty Jonathan Swift determined to make an end of at least one of them. He chose the most noted of the band, a man named Partridge, and wrote a pamphlet in which, using the same methods as the almanac-makers used, he gravely foretold that Partridge would die at 11 P.M. on March 29, and when that date passed he solemnly announced that the man was dead. In vain Partridge angrily protested that he was alive; the more he stormed, the more certainly Isaac Bickerstaff proved, from infallible signs, that he must be, and was, dead. All the wits of the day took up the joke, and mourned the death of poor Partridge with mock solemnity. For months the whole town listened and laughed, so that when readers took up the first number of the new paper and saw the name of "Isaac Bickerstaff" as its editor they were at once favourably disposed toward it and prepared to find it good.

Steele called his paper *The Tatler*, and in this first number he told his readers what they might expect to find in it. He addressed himself especially to the frequenters of the different coffee-houses.

All accounts of Gallantry, Pleasure, and Entertainment, shall be under the article of White's Chocolate House; Poetry under that of Will's Coffee-house; Learning under the title of Grecian; Foreign and Domestic News you will have from Saint James's Coffee-house; and what else I have to offer on any other subject shall be dated from my own apartment.

*The Tatler* was not, however, to be wholly for coffee-house readers. It was to provide entertainment for the "fair sex"



also. "The general purpose of this paper," said Isaac Bickerstaff, "is to expose the false arts of life, to pull off the disguises of cunning, vanity, and affectation, and to recommend a general simplicity in our dress, our discourse, and our behaviour."

For a few weeks *The Tatler* kept close to its original plan, and gave its readers the news of the day, with a short essay that took up only a small portion of the space. But Steele was so eager to put his ideals before his readers that very soon this essay became the most important item in the paper. He wrote against drunkenness, gambling, and duelling and swearing, against affectation in dress and in manner. He tried to show his readers what was really meant by the word 'gentleman.' A gentleman, he taught them, does not depend on his fine clothes, or his snuff-box, or his cane to show his quality. His chief mark is the regard that he pays to the feelings of other people. He will rather lose the chance of saying a witty thing than hurt or discomfit anyone in his company; he will hold firmly to his own opinions, but will never thrust them upon those who think differently; his manners will be dignified and pleasant without being stiff or boisterous. Again and again Steele returned to this ideal, insisting that unselfishness and consideration for others were the true marks of a gentleman.

He pictured Isaac Bickerstaff, the imaginary editor, as an aged, solitary man, who, like the astrologers of earlier times, lived surrounded by mysterious instruments and vessels and all the objects used in his calling. He had a familiar spirit named Pacolet, who was able to read men's thoughts and reveal their secrets to his master. Between them these two could deal with any subject that had to do with the life of man, and after a short time Steele invented a lady editor, Jenny Distaff, half-sister to Isaac, who discoursed on all that related to women. Thus Steele was able to give some charming pictures of home life. Jenny Distaff, who was just an ordinary, pleasant, sensible, middle-class girl, married an honest man of business. The readers of *The Tatler* were told of her wedding, and of the home



in which she and her husband, Tranquillus, lived simply and happily; of their domestic troubles and difficulties and how they get over them; of how they paid visits and entertained guests, and of what Jenny wore and how she behaved.

In the number of *The Tatler* that appeared on November 17, 1709, Steele gave one of his most delightful pictures of happy home life. He was trying to show that many people had pleasures within their reach—simple, natural pleasures—which they did not properly enjoy because they did not realize how precious and highly to be valued they were. Steele said:

I am led into this thought by a visit I made an old friend, who was formerly a schoolfellow. He came to town last week with his family for the winter, and yesterday morning sent me word his wife expected me to dinner. I am as it were at home at that house, and every member of it knows me for their well-wisher. I cannot indeed express the pleasure it is to be met by the children with so much joy as I am when I go thither. The boys and girls strive who shall come first, when they think it is I that am knocking at the door; and that child which loses the race to me runs back again to tell the father it is Mr Bickerstaff. This day I was led in by a pretty girl, that we all thought must have forgot me; for the family has been out of town these two years. Her knowing me again was a mighty subject with us and took up our discourse at the first entrance. After which they began to rally me upon a thousand little stories they heard in the country about my marriage to one of my neighbour's daughters. Upon which the gentleman, my friend, said, "Nay, if Mr Bickerstaff marries a child of any of his old companions, I hope mine shall have the preference; there is Mrs Mary is now sixteen, and would make him as fine a widow as the best of them. But I know him too well; he is so enamoured with the very memory of those who flourished in our youth, that he will not so much as look upon the modern beauties. . . ."

With such reflections on little passages that happened long ago, we passed our time, during a cheerful and elegant meal. After dinner his lady left the room, as did also the children. As soon as we were alone, he took me by the hand: "Well, my good friend," says he, "I am heartily glad to see thee. I was afraid you would never have seen all the company that dined with you to-day again. Do you not think the good woman of the house a little altered since you followed her from the playhouse to find out who she was for me?" I perceived a tear fall down his cheek as he spoke, which moved me not a little. . . . "Oh! she is an



inestimable jewel. In her examination of her household affairs, she shows a certain fearfulness to find a fault, which makes her servants obey her like children: and the meanest we have has an ingenuous shame for an offence, not always to be seen in children in other families. I speak freely to you, my old friend; ever since her sickness things that gave me the quickest joy before turn now to a certain anxiety. As the children play in the next room, I know the poor things by their steps, and am considering what they must do, should they lose their mother in their tender years. . . .”

He would have gone on in this tender way, when the good lady entered, and with an inexpressible sweetness in her countenance, told us she had been searching her closet for something very good to treat such an old friend as I was. Her husband's eyes sparkled with pleasure at the cheerfulness of her countenance; and I saw all his fears vanish in an instant. The lady, observing something in our looks which showed we had been more serious than ordinary, and seeing her husband receive her with great concern under a forced cheerfulness, immediately guessed at what we had been talking of; and, applying herself to me, said with a smile, “Mr Bickerstaff, do not believe a word of what he tells you. I shall still live to have you for my second, as I have often promised you, unless he takes more care of himself than he has done since his coming to town. You must know he tells me that he finds London is a much more healthy place than the country; for he sees several of his old acquaintances and schoolfellows are here, young fellows with fair, full-bottomed periwigs. I could scarce keep him this morning from going out open-breasted.” My friend, who is always extremely delighted with her agreeable humour, made her sit down with us. She did it with that easiness which is peculiar to women of sense; and to keep up the good humour she had brought in with her, turned her raillery upon me. . . .

On a sudden we were alarmed with the noise of a drum, and immediately entered my little godson to give me a point of war. His mother, between laughing and chiding, would have put him out of the room; but I would not part with him so. I found upon conversation with him, though he was a little noisy in his mirth, that the child had excellent parts, and was a great master of all the learning on the other side eight years old. I perceived him a very great historian in *Æsop's Fables*; but he frankly declared to me his mind that he did not delight in that learning, for he did not believe they were true; for which reason I found he had very much turned his studies for about a twelvemonth past, into the life and adventures of Don Bellianis of Greece, Guy of Warwick, the Seven Champions, and other historians of that age. I could not but observe the satisfaction the father took in the forwardness



of his son; and that these diversions might turn to some profit I found the boy had made remarks which might be of service to him during the course of his whole life. He would tell you the mismanagements of John Hickathrift, find fault with the passionate temper in Bevis of Southampton, and loved Saint George for being the champion of England; and by this means had his thoughts insensibly moulded into the notions of discretion, virtue, and honour. I was extolling his accomplishment, when the mother told me that the little girl who led me in this morning was in her way a better scholar than he. "Betty," says she, "deals chiefly in fairies and sprights; and sometimes, in a winter night, will terrify the maids with her accounts, till they are afraid to go up to bed!"

I sat with them till it was very late, sometimes in merry, sometimes in serious, discourse, with this particular pleasure, which gives the only true relish to all conversation, a sense that everyone of us liked each other. I went home, considering the different conditions of a married life and that of a bachelor; and I must confess it struck me with a secret concern, to reflect, that whenever I go off, I shall leave no trace behind me. In this pensive mood I return to my family; that is to say, to my maid, my dog, and my cat, who only can be the better or worse for what happens to me.

About six weeks later Steele wrote a paper telling of the death of the mother of this family, and the grief of those who were left; and he describes this as simply and touchingly as he has described their joy.

Before many numbers of *The Tatler* had appeared some of the people who knew Richard Steele well had guessed who Isaac Bickerstaff really was. One of the first to find him out was Joseph Addison. He and Steele had been at the Charterhouse School and at Oxford together. They were exactly of an age, but Addison had always seemed older, because he was graver and steadier and stronger willed. Richard Steele as a schoolboy had looked up to him and adored him, and even when they were both grown men something of the feeling remained. After their college days they had for some time seen little of each other. Addison had gained a great name as a scholar, and had published various classical translations and verses addressed to celebrated people. In 1704 he had written *The Campaign*, which celebrated Marlborough's victory at



Blenheim, and as a reward he had been given a post as Under-Secretary of State, and had entered upon a political career.

When the first number of *The Tatler* appeared Addison was in Ireland, where he had gone as secretary to the Lord Lieutenant, but, as has been said, he very quickly guessed that the editor was his old schoolfellow. He offered his help, and Steele was only too glad to accept it. For about eighteen months the two friends worked happily together and *The Tatler* flourished. Neither of them took any great interest in the part of the paper that contained the news, and by and by it became clear that their readers did not set any great value on it either. There were by this time quite a number of papers that gave the news of the day, but nowhere except in *The Tatler* could be found essays that gave, in a form as entertaining as a story, just the guidance and inspiration that Londoners needed. Addison and Steele decided that it would be well to make some alterations in their paper. So the last number of *The Tatler* appeared on January 2, 1711, and the first number of a new paper, *The Spectator*, came out two months later, on March 1. It was published every day (*The Tatler* had appeared only three times a week), and each number contained a single essay on some particular subject.

Isaac Bickerstaff disappeared with *The Tatler*, and in his place came another imaginary figure, who had no name, but was called "the Spectator." In the first essay, which was written by Addison, this gentleman introduced himself to the readers of the paper.

I was born to a small Hereditary Estate, which, according to the tradition of the village where it lies, was bounded by the same Hedges and Ditches in William the Conqueror's Time that it is at present, and has been delivered down from Father to Son whole and entire, without the Loss or Acquisition of a single Field or Meadow, during the space of six hundred Years. I find that, during my Nonage, I had the Reputation of a very sullen Youth, but was always a Favourite of my School-master, who used to say *that my parts were solid and would wear well*. I had not been long at the University before I distinguished myself by a most profound Silence; for during the Space of eight Years,



excepting in the public Exercises of the College, I scarce uttered the Quantity of an hundred Words; and indeed do not remember that I ever spoke three Sentences together in my whole Life. While I was in this Learned Body, I applied myself with so much Diligence to my Studies, that there are very few celebrated Books, either in the Learned or the Modern Tongues, which I am not acquainted with.

Upon the death of my Father I was resolved to travel into Foreign Countries, and therefore left the University with the Character of an odd unaccountable Fellow, that had a great deal of Learning if I would but show it. An insatiable Thirst after Knowledge carried me into all the Countries of Europe, in which there was anything new or strange to be seen. . . . I have passed my latter Years in this City, where I am frequently seen in most publick Places, tho' there are not above half a dozen of my select Friends that know me. . . . In short, wherever I see a Cluster of People I always mix with them, though I never open my Lips but in my own Club.

When I consider how much I have seen, read and heard, I begin to blame my own Taciturnity; and since I have neither Time nor Inclination to communicate the Fulness of my Heart in Speech, I am resolved to do it in Writing; and to print myself out, if possible, before I Die. . . . For this Reason, therefore, I shall publish a Sheet-full of Thoughts every Morning for the Benefit of my Contemporaries. And if I can any way contribute to the Diversion or Improvement of the Country in which I live, I shall leave it when I am summoned out of it with the secret Satisfaction of thinking that I have not Lived in vain.

In the next number Steele described the group of "select friends" who, with the Spectator, formed a club, and who assisted him in preparing the papers that he wrote. There was Sir Roger de Coverley, a gentleman of Worcestershire,

now in his Fifty-sixth Year, cheerful, gay and hearty, keeps a good House both in Town and Country; a great Lover of Mankind; but there is such a mirthful Cast in his Behaviour that he is rather beloved than esteemed: his Tenants grow rich, his Servants look satisfied, all the young Women profess Love to him and the young Men are glad of his Company.

Next comes a gentleman of the Inner Temple, whose name is not given; then Sir Andrew Freeport, "a merchant of great eminence in the city of London"; Captain Sentry, "a gentleman of great courage, good understanding, but invincible honesty"; gallant Will Honeycomb, the elderly beau,



who is still a great man among the ladies, and can tell stories of the belles of two generations. These, with a clergyman who is an occasional visitor, make up the club. A large number of the *Spectator* papers tell of the doings of these gentlemen. In the week which ended July 7, 1711, for example, five out of the six papers were of this kind. On Monday morning Addison told his readers how the *Spectator* visited Sir Roger de Coverley at his country house. "I am the more at Ease in Sir Roger's Family," says the *Spectator*,

because it consists of sober and staid Persons; for, as the Knight is the best Master in the World, he seldom changes his Servants; and as he is beloved by all about him, his Servants never care for leaving him. By this means his Domesticks are all in Years, and grown old with their Master. You would take his Valet de Chambre for his Brother, his Butler is grey-headed, his Groom is one of the gravest Men that I have ever seen, and his Coachman has the Looks of a Privy Counsellor. You see the Goodness of the Master even in the old House-dog and in a grey Pad that is kept in the Stable with great Care and Tenderness out of regard to his past Services, tho' he has been useless for several years.

On Tuesday Steele took up the story, and told of Sir Roger's relations with his servants, "the lower part of his family":

A Man who preserves a Respect founded on Benevolence to his Dependants lives rather like a Prince than a Master in his Family; his Orders are received as Favours rather than Duties; and the Distinction of approaching him is part of the Reward for executing what is commanded by him.

On Wednesday Addison introduced his readers to Will Wimble, a friend of Sir Roger's, the younger son of an ancient family, who "being bred to no business and born to no estate," has "frittered away his time in trivialities, and put the real talents that he possesses to no useful purpose."

On Thursday Steele related how Sir Roger took the *Spectator* round his picture-gallery and showed him the portraits of his ancestors. Pointing to one portrait, he said:

This man I take to be the Honour of our House. Sir Humphrey de Coverley; he was in his Dealings as punctual as a Tradesman,



and as generous as a Gentleman. He would have thought himself as much undone by breaking his Word as if it were to be followed by Bankruptcy. He served his country as Knight of this Shire to his dying Day. . . . Innocence of Life and great Ability were the distinguishing Parts of his Character. . . . He was an Excellent Husbandman, but had resolved not to exceed such a degree of Wealth; all above it he bestowed in secret Bounties many Years after the Sum he aimed at for his own use was attained. Yet he did not slacken his Industry, but to a decent old Age spent the Life and Fortune which was superfluous to himself in the Service of his Friends and Neighbours.

On Friday Addison told of a conversation between Sir Roger and the Spectator concerning ghosts. There was a long "walk of aged Elms" near the house, where, the Spectator says,

my good Friend the Butler desired me with a very grave Face not to venture myself in after Sunset, for that one of the Footmen had been almost frightened out of his Wits by a Spirit that appeared to him in the Shape of a black Horse without an Head; to which he added, that about a Month ago one of the Maids, coming home late that Way with a Pail of Milk upon her Head, heard such a Rustling among the Bushes that she let it fall.

The Saturday number of *The Spectator* always contained a serious paper, that the readers might be put in a proper frame of mind for Sunday. This particular Saturday brought an essay on immortality, by Addison. So for one day the history of Sir Roger was interrupted, only to begin again on Monday with one of the most delightful of all the Coverley papers, "Sir Roger at Church."

There were other papers on all kinds of subjects—on literature, religion, philosophy, the ways and manners of society, on dress and fashions, on art and music and the theatre. Addison in one of the early numbers had said :

I would therefore in a very particular Manner recommend these my Speculations to all well-regulated Families, that set apart an Hour in every Morning for Tea and Bread and Butter; and would earnestly advise them for their Good to order this Paper to be punctually served up, and to be looked upon as a Part of the Tea Equipage.



His hopes came very near to being realized. Before *The Spectator* came to an end in December 1712 it had been introduced into almost every household in the town.

The two papers, *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*, had really done a great deal of what Steele had hoped they would do when he made his venture in 1709. In the four years during which they had appeared a great change for the better had taken place in the manners and habits of London citizens, and this, historians agree, was in part due to Steele and Addison. An ideal had been set up before them—not a dim vision, but a clear picture of a gentleman, honest, kindly, and God-fearing, who lived simply and talked without coarseness, who showed respect for women and consideration for his servants. It was an ideal not too far beyond the reach of anyone of them to make them hopeless of reaching it; and when once they had come to realize that a gentleman need not necessarily be a profligate their advance was rapid.

### III. THE COURT

We will turn now from the coffee-houses to St James's Palace, where Queen Anne held her Court. Anne was much more popular than William III had been. She was one of the old Stuart line, and loyalty to the Stuarts had not died out in England, in spite of what had been done in the Revolution of 1688. Her people gathered round her, and her Court, although it was not very gay or brilliant, was attended by all the nobility and all the most famous men in the country. The great Duke of Marlborough and his Duchess overshadowed the rest, but there were many other notable people, and as the reign went on nearly all the great writers of the day were to be found among them. The time had not yet come when writers could afford to do without Court favour. The reading public, although it was growing quickly, was still not very large, and it included many people who read scarcely anything except the newspapers. Dramatists might make a living out of the theatre,



and Steele and Addison had been very lucky in finding so many readers for their daily *Spectator*, but most literary works, even when, like *Absalom and Achitophel*, they were very popular, did not sell in sufficient numbers to bring in much money for their authors. So poor writers tried to attract the attention of some rich and generous nobleman, or perhaps of the King himself; and these patrons would make them a gift of a large sum of money, or obtain a light and well-paid State office for them, so that they could go on with their work without having to trouble about earning their living.

Nearly all these rich and influential people to whom the writers looked were keenly interested in the politics of the day. They were either very strong Whigs or very strong Tories. If a clever writer was willing to use his talent to uphold one or other of these parties he was almost sure to find a patron eager to reward him; and so a chance was given him of making a name for himself, and people were ready to read other works that he wrote. The poetry that the clever and cultivated society of the day liked was not the poetry of Shakespeare or Milton or any of the older poets. They liked smooth, polished verse about events of the day or about abstract ideas that could be treated lightly and wittily. In 1704 Joseph Addison was a poor scholar, making a modest living by translations and other literary work, and living quietly in a London lodging, when there came to him a messenger from Lord Godolphin, the Whig Lord Treasurer, commissioning him to write a poem on Marlborough's late victory at Blenheim. The Tories were against the war, and the Whigs wanted to celebrate this victory as loudly as possible in order to strengthen their side. So Addison wrote *The Campaign*, which pleased the Whigs so well that from that moment his fortune was made. He was given the post of Under-Secretary of State, and was advanced from that office to others more important. He was a Member of Parliament from 1708 to his death. In 1716 he married the Dowager Countess of Warwick, and went to live at her mansion in Kensington, Holland House. It is not by *The Campaign* that



we remember Addison now, but by his wonderful *Spectator* papers; it was, however, those smooth, polished, flattering verses that brought the greatest reward. This is how he described Marlborough:

'Twas then great Marlbro's mighty soul was prov'd,  
That, in the shock of changing hosts unmov'd,  
Amidst confusion, horror, and despair,  
Examin'd all the dreadful scenes of war;  
In peaceful thought the field of death survey'd,  
To fainting squadrons sent the timely aid,  
Inspir'd repuls'd battalions to engage,  
And taught the doubtful battle where to rage.  
So when an angel by divine command  
With rising tempests shakes a guilty land,  
Such as of late o'er pale Britannia past,  
Calm and serene he drives the furious blast;  
And pleas'd th' Almighty's orders to perform,  
Rides in the whirlwind and directs the storm.

Jonathan Swift too was on the side of the Whigs. He was a haughty, irritable, brilliant young man, who had taken priest's orders, and had lived for nearly nine years as secretary in the household of Sir William Temple. He was big and powerful-looking, and had a wonderful power of overawing any company in which he was placed; when he drew his black brows into a scowl and shot out fiery glances from his vividly blue eyes there were few people who could stand before him. On the death of Sir William Temple he was given a small living and some other offices in Ireland, but he did not stay there long. His restless, ambitious spirit could not be content with a retired life, and he came to London to seek his fortune. He was already well known there through several satirical works that he had written—*The Battle of the Books*, *The Tale of a Tub*, and others—and he soon became better known still by his attack on Partridge, the almanac-maker, of which we have spoken. But he gained no advancement in the Church, and no help of any kind from the Whigs, whose cause he had taken up, and he grew disgusted and impatient and went back to Laracor. He paid several other visits to London, and quarrelled with the Whigs on many points, especially about the



way they were treating the Church. In 1710 the Tories came into power, and their two leaders, Harley and St John, tried very hard to bring Swift over to their side. In the end they succeeded. Swift's chief interest was in the Church, and the Church policy of the Tories was far more to his mind than was that of the Whigs.

So he left Laracor in charge of a curate, and settled in London. He was now forty-two years old, tall and stately, and as arrogant and overbearing as ever. Yet when he chose he had a charm of manner that no one could resist. Young and old fell under his spell. Beautiful young girls were flattered when he spoke to them, and took no notice of the attentions of the most courtly young gentlemen if only they could win a glance from the awe-inspiring Mr Swift. Cabinet Ministers put up with his hectoring manners and took pains to please him. Two or three people loved him passionately and devotedly, though they gained little happiness by doing so. All through his life this strange power of winning hearts remained with him, and brought to him and to others more of evil than of good. His new friends flattered and made much of him, and he became a great man in London. In 1711 he wrote a political tract called *The Conduct of the Allies*, which greatly benefited their cause, and is said to have helped to bring about the Peace of Utrecht. He wrote many other political pamphlets that were highly praised. His keen, stinging wit was a strong weapon in the hands of the party to which he belonged, and they valued it highly. Yet they did not reward him with the bishopric he had hoped for. They told him that it was because they could not spare him from London, and that, as far as it went, was true; but a stronger reason was that Queen Anne did not like him, and doubted the sincerity of his religious faith.

From 1710 to 1713 Swift remained in London, and was busy and courted and famous. He spent his days in the company of the great. He went to all the balls and brilliant gatherings, where he scolded duchesses, who received his reproofs with



meekness, and instructed the Court gallants as to the way a gentleman should behave himself. He went on jaunts to Windsor with Cabinet Ministers as his companions, and laid down the law to them concerning affairs of State. All sorts of people came to him begging for his influence and his favour, and he gave or withheld it in his arrogant fashion. Then, when the day's business was over, he came home to his modest lodging in St James's Street. Patrick, his Irish servant, had made him up a good fire, but he scolded the man for his extravagance, and carefully picked off all the coal that was yet unburnt, for he was a saving man, and money was not too plentiful. Most of the money he saved in these economies was given away in charity, but he never spoke of that, and few people, except the poor who blessed him for his help, knew how really tender the harsh-mannered Swift's heart was to those who sorely needed help. When the fire was low enough to please him he made himself ready, put on his fur-lined nightcap, laid out pen and paper, and got into bed.

Then, for an hour or more, he lived in a world very different from the fashionable one he had just left. He thought, not of London, which was the scene of his triumph, but of a fine old house in Surrey—Moor Park—where he had spent his youth as a poor dependant of its master, Sir William Temple; and most of all he thought of a beautiful little girl who had been eight years old when he knew her first, a merry child, with large dark eyes and a lovely face. She was the daughter of Mrs Johnson, waiting-maid to Lady Giffard, Sir William Temple's sister, and she was the joy and the darling of the whole household. Everybody loved her, but nobody loved her as well as did the moody, discontented Irish lad, whom the others laughed at for his awkward ways and his clumsy figure, though they went in awe of his bitter tongue. Little Esther Johnson did not laugh at him, and indeed with her he was neither clumsy nor bitter. Swift remembered now, as he thought over the past in his quiet room, the games they had together, the hours in which he taught her, and the pretty,



loving ways that had soothed his angry pride, and made him tender and gentle, as she was. He remembered how he had watched her grow up into a beautiful girl, and how they had loved one another more and more as each year went by. And then he sighed as he took up his pen to write his daily letter to this Esther Johnson, who was now a woman of thirty-four, and still his faithful, loving friend.

When Swift had been given the living of Laracor he had persuaded Esther Johnson to come, with her friend, a certain Rebecca Dingley, and settle down near him. The three had lived on terms of the closest friendship, and when Swift was away from Laracor he kept a journal in which each evening he wrote an account of the day's doings, and which he sent on to Esther and Rebecca at regular intervals. It was addressed to both of them, but it was really meant for Esther, or Stella, which was the name by which Swift called her. This journal was published after Swift's death, and we can read in it now all the fond, foolish things that this proud, overbearing man wrote to the woman who had loved him long and faithfully. Some of it is written in baby language, perhaps after the fashion in which he and Stella used to talk when she was a small girl at Moor Park. Stella is called Ppt—which means Poppet; Swift himself is Pdfr, which perhaps stands for poor, dear, foolish rogue. M.D. is "my dear," and sometimes stands for Stella, sometimes for Rebecca, and sometimes for both of them. "I assure oo," wrote Swift in one of his journal letters, "it im vely late now; but zis goes to-morrow; and I must have time to converse with my own deerichar M.D. Nite de deer Sollahs, Rove Pdfr." If Harley, or St John, or one of the snubbed fine ladies could have seen these letters how astounded they would have been!

The *Journal* tells of all the trifling little incidents of Swift's days. It tells how Patrick had been misbehaving, and how the bill for coals and candles sometimes came to three shillings a week; how that morning he had an attack of the giddiness and sickness to which he was subject, and which he dreaded so



much, and how a visitor came, and sat with him for two hours, and drank a pint of ale that cost him fivepence; how there was a coldness between him and Mr Addison for political reasons, and how he dined with Mr Secretary St John, having made it a condition that he should choose who should be invited to meet him. He teases Stella about her bad spelling, about her losses at cards, and the fine company she keeps. He enquires tenderly about her ailments, and bids her save her "precious eyes," which are inclined to weakness, by letting Rebecca read her letters for her.

But he says little about a certain Mrs Vanhomrigh and her two daughters, with whom he is growing very friendly. He mentions the occasions when he dines there, but he does not say how many hours he idles away in the comfortable, homely parlour of "neighbour Van," and how he has taken up his old office of tutor—this time to another Esther, Esther Vanhomrigh, to whom he has given the name of Vanessa. He does not tell how this girl, who is still almost a child, has begun to hang upon his words just as the other Esther did in the old days at Moor Park. He persuades himself that there is no need to tell all this, that a man may surely have two friends, though he may only have one wife, that Esther is a dear child, but Stella, his old friend, is dearer still. All this is very likely true; yet he knows that each of the Esthers would be hurt and jealous if she knew all about the other, and he knows that he is not acting with the sincerity and uprightness that he has always held so proudly, and has taught both his pupils to hold also.

In June 1713 Swift at last received promotion in the Church, but it was not the promotion he had wished for. He was made Dean of St Patrick's, Dublin, and in 1714 he went back to Ireland to take up his office. We will not follow him there for the present, but will go back to look at another poet who was to be found at Queen Anne's Court.

He was a young man, sickly and slightly deformed, the son of a retired linendraper living at Binfield, in Windsor Forest.



His name was Alexander Pope, and he had been brought up as a Roman Catholic, so he could not go to either of the universities. He was educated at a private school until he was twelve years old, and after that he educated himself. He read enormously, and taught himself Latin, Greek, French, and Italian that he might read poems in those languages. While he was still very young he began to write verses, and he sent some of these to well-known people of the day, asking them to criticize his attempts and advise him how he could improve them. There was nothing very original in the poems, but they dealt with everyday matters in just the clear, terse way that fashionable people admired, and the thoughts were so aptly expressed, and the versification was so smooth and correct, that all who read them were impressed. Pope soon found patrons ready to help him, and a volume of his poems was published in 1709.

He went on writing, and began a poem called *Windsor Forest*, but before this was finished he published two others which made him famous. The first was called *An Essay on Criticism*, and had been written in 1709, though it did not appear until 1711. I will quote a few lines of this poem to show you Pope's clear, polished style, which became the model for all the poets of his day:

Words are like leaves; and where they most abound,  
Much fruit of sense beneath is rarely found;  
False eloquence, like the prismatic glass,  
Its gaudy colours spreads on ev'ry place;  
The face of nature we no more survey,  
All glares alike, without distinction gay;  
But true expression, like th' unchanging sun,  
Clears and improves whate'er it shines upon:  
It gilds all objects, but it alters none.

The second poem was called *The Rape of the Lock*, and the cause of its being written was a quarrel that arose between two noble families. At a party of pleasure at Hampton Court young Lord Petre, in a fit of playfulness and high spirits, had cut off a lock of hair from the head of the beautiful Miss Arabella Fermor. Neither the young lady nor her family was inclined to treat this as a joke, but rather as an insult which



was greatly resented. Lord Petre's family upheld his side, and the quarrel spread, until there was a great commotion in the town. Friends did their best to smooth things down, but with no avail; and John Caryl, who was intimate with both families concerned, suggested to Pope that he should write a poem in which the whole affair should be treated in a playful manner and the offence shown to be only a piece of high-spirited fun. Pope took up the idea at once and set to work.

He wrote his poem in a mock-serious style, and this lofty fashion of dealing with trivial matters gave it a light and pleasant humour. He described the beautiful heroine, whom he called Belinda, and told how she rose at midday, and how her maids attended at the solemn ceremonial of her toilet, so that she went out more beautiful than ever; how the gay party journeyed to Hampton Court by the river Thames; how they took tea there; and how, in the midst of that meal, Lord Petre committed the attack on Miss Fermor's locks that had caused so much commotion.

The style exactly suited Pope's powers, and the poem was greatly praised everywhere, though it did not succeed in doing what it had set out to do. Miss Fermor, although she had been so highly praised, was inclined to be offended at the way in which the poet had made public an affair which was her private concern; but she did not refuse a copy of the verses, and she consented to their being published in *Lintot's Miscellany* (1712). Pope himself was highly delighted with his work, but he had written it in haste, and he thought he might improve it. He went carefully over it, and introduced into it a company of invisible gnomes and elves, whom he supposed to take part in the action, and in this form it was more admired than ever. Here are a few extracts from it:

Not with more glories, in th' ethereal plain,  
The sun first rises o'er the purpled main,  
Than, issuing forth, the rival of his beams  
Launch'd on the bosom of the silver Thames.  
Fair nymphs, and well-drest youths around her shone  
But every eye was fix'd on her alone. . . .



## THE LONDON OF THE LATER STUARTS

---

This nymph, to the destruction of mankind,  
Nourish'd two locks which graceful hung behind  
In equal curls, and well conspired to deck  
With shining ringlets the smooth iv'ry neck.

The advent'rous Baron the bright locks admir'd:  
He saw, he wish'd, and to the prize aspir'd,  
Resolv'd to win, he meditates the way,  
By force to ravish or by fraud betray.

But now secure the painted vessel glides,  
The sunbeams trembling on the floating tides;  
While melting music steals upon the sky,  
And softened sounds along the waters die;  
Smooth flow the waves, the Zephyrs gently play,  
Belinda smil'd, and all the world was gay.

For lo! the board with cups and spoons is crown'd, . . .  
From silver spouts the grateful liquors glide,  
While China's earth receives the smoking tide;  
At once they gratify their scent and taste,  
And frequent cups prolong the rich repast.

The peer now spreads the glittering forfex wide,  
T'inclose the lock; now joins it, to divide.  
Ev'n then, before the fatal engine clos'd,  
A wretched sylph too fondly interpos'd;  
Fate urg'd the shears, and cut the sylph in twain,  
(But airy substance soon unites again)  
The meeting points the sacred hair dis sever  
From the fair head, for ever and for ever!

In 1713 Pope finished *Windsor Forest* and published it. It described the country round about his home, and told of some of the great events that had happened at Windsor in the past. His friends at Court saw it, and thought it so good that they were anxious to win Pope over to politics, that he might help them by his writings. Lord Lansdowne persuaded him to add a few lines in praise of the Peace of Utrecht that had lately been signed, and he did so, and thus joined himself to the Tory party.

He wrote as industriously as his bad health would let him. He was poor, and his parents were old and ailing, and he wrote for money as well as for fame; but he never let his poems go out of his hands until he had corrected and recorrected,



polished and repolished, and made them as nearly perfect as labour and pains, added to genius, could do. Pope was only twenty-six years old when *The Rape of the Lock*, which made him famous, was written. But he wanted money too; and the next thing he undertook was a piece of hard, laborious work which he hoped would give it to him. He undertook to prepare an English version of Homer, and his friends quickly obtained for him a long list of subscribers. But long before it was finished there came a change in the country. Queen Anne died, and the Golden Age was at an end.



---

## *Chapter XXIV*

### THE LIGHT READING OF THE ENGLISHMAN UNDER THE FIRST TWO GEORGES

#### I. "ROBINSON CRUSOE"

**S**EVENTEEN hundred and fourteen saw the first king of a new line reigning over England—a king, stout, homely, and middle-aged, who could not speak a word of his subjects' language, and who, with all his honest intention of doing his duty to the people he had been called to govern, looked back to Hanover as his real, dearly loved home. Over the Border appeared in 1715 a Stuart prince, come to claim the throne of his fathers; but the rising in his favour was ill-managed and half-hearted, and it failed utterly, and the defeated Pretender went sadly back to his exile.

This did not mean that loyalty to the Stuarts had died out in England. All through the reigns of the first two Georges there was a party that planned and plotted to restore the old line. There were many people also who, although they believed the Hanoverian rule was best for the country, still felt sympathy and even love for the exiled Stuarts. In 1720 a son, Charles Edward, was born to the Old Pretender, and this greatly strengthened the Stuart cause. The boy grew up strong and gallant and handsome, and became the object of passionate and romantic devotion among the Jacobites in Scotland and England. But the rising in his favour which took place in 1745 failed, as the rising in favour of his father had failed thirty years before; and though the Jacobites still drank to "the King over the water," and lassies on both sides of the Border still sang the Jacobite songs, "Charlie is my darling" and "Who'll be King but Charlie!" the cause had no longer any real influence in England.



It was perhaps because everyone was thinking so much about these rival claimants to the throne that few really great works were written during the early years of the Hanoverian rule. The old writers were scattered and for the time silent, and no fresh ones had come to take their places. Pope was working hard at his translation of Homer's *Iliad*; Steele was trying to start a new paper, and Addison was helping him, but they were having little success; and Swift was away at his deanery in Ireland.

There was another writer whom we heard of before, when he was writing pamphlets and tracts for the readers at the coffee-houses—Daniel Defoe. All through the reign of Queen Anne he had been very busy with political matters; he had had a finger in every political pie; his rides over England as an election agent for Harley in 1704 and 1705 had made him famous; he had produced and edited a newspaper written entirely by himself; he had been amazingly active and energetic, and although he was fifty-four years old at the time of George I's accession he was still working and writing and plotting as busily as ever. He knew all about the Jacobite schemes and the secret correspondence that was going on between the exiled prince and his English supporters; he joined in the religious dispute that was going on; and he wrote so many tracts and pamphlets that historians have scarcely been able to believe that all these could possibly be the work of one man.

Yet with all this he had a little more time than when he had been actively employed by the Government. His work did not take him away from home so much, and he was more often to be seen in the house that he had bought for himself in the pleasant rural village of Stoke Newington—a large, handsome dwelling, with stables, coach-house, and beautifully kept gardens. Here he lived very comfortably with his wife and his “three lovely daughters, who were admired for their beauty, their education, and their prudent conduct.” He had three sons also, but they were out in the world, earning their own living. We can be quite sure that the household at Stoke



Newington was not a dull one, with restless, lively Daniel Defoe at its head, and that the news of the day was received with interest there and eagerly discussed.

So when, in 1718, the newspapers told of a formidable band of pirates who were becoming a terror to sailors on the high seas Defoe was at once on the alert. He knew that the story would arouse strong interest in the country, for Englishmen are always ready to listen to tales of strange adventures in far-off regions. We might have expected that he would write a stirring article on the subject, and perhaps that was his first thought. But he remembered that six years before London had been very much interested in a Scottish sailor, Alexander Selkirk, who had been put ashore by his captain on the desert island of Juan Fernandez, and had lived there for four years (1705-9) quite alone. He had been rescued by Captain Rogers, who had brought him back to England in 1711, and had told his story fully in his book *A Cruising Voyage round the World*, published in 1712. Richard Steele had been very much interested in this story, and had sought out Alexander Selkirk and heard it again from his mouth; and on December 3, 1712, there had appeared in *The Englishman*, a paper that Richard Steele was then editing, an account of the strange adventure. Defoe had seen it, and perhaps had put the paper by to be used when he had less business on hand; and now, in 1718, it seemed to him that it would make just the story that the people in their present frame of mind would be eager to read.

He sat down to write it, as he had sat down so many hundreds of times to write an article or a tract. He began in his usual businesslike and direct fashion, using the first person, and giving all those little details which made it sound like an actual story of real life.

I was born in the year 1632, in the city of York, of a good family, though not of that country, my father being a foreigner of Bremen, who settled first at Hull; he got a good estate by merchandize, and leaving off his trade, lived afterward at York, from whence he had married my mother, whose relations were named Robinson, a very good family in that county, and from whom I was called



Robinson Kreutznaer; but by the usual corruption of words in England, we are now called, nay, we call ourselves, and write our name, Crusoe; and so my companions always called me.

Very likely Defoe did not think he was writing anything more than just a story that would interest people for a few weeks or a few months and then be dropped. It was almost by accident that he wrote a book which has become a great classic, and has already lasted for more than two hundred years. It is like his other writings, and yet it is unlike them. The plain, direct style is the same, and the quick, lively spirit that runs through it all; but it has besides just that touch of genius that makes Robinson Crusoe a real, living man and his adventures a part of the great story of the world.

None of you want me to tell you what *Robinson Crusoe* is about. You read it, of course, years ago. You will remember that the story is different in many ways from the story of Alexander Selkirk. Robinson Crusoe was not put ashore by his captain, but was cast on the island by a shipwreck, in which all on board, except himself, were lost. Defoe made his stay on the island last for twenty-eight years, instead of Alexander Selkirk's four, and he added exciting accounts of attacks by savages and horrid feasts held by blood-stained cannibals. He introduced Man Friday, and made him almost more interesting than Crusoe himself. Yet with all these thrilling incidents most boys and girls seem to think that the really delightful parts of the book are those which tell with such interesting detail how the solitary man managed to provide himself with food and clothes and lodging, and turned whole tracts of his desert island into cultivated fields. His accounts of how after many trials he made earthen pots that would stand the fire, how he managed to bake his bread, how he contrived an umbrella that would let up and down, are fascinating, because they are a mixture of romance and homeliness. The little pictures that Defoe gives all through the book are made up in the same way; they are drawn from everyday life, but they have a suggestion of greater things that prevents



them from being commonplace. "It would have made a Stoic smile," says Crusoe,

to have seen me and my little family sit down to dinner. There was my majesty, the prince and lord of the whole island. I had the lives of all my subjects at my absolute command; I could hang, draw, give liberty and take it away, and no rebels among all my subjects. Then to see how like a king I dined too, all alone, attended by my servants! Poll, as if he had been my favourite, was the only person permitted to talk to me, my dog, who was now grown very old and crazy, sat always at my right hand; and two cats, one on one side of the table and one on the other, expecting now and then a bit from my hand, as a mark of special favour.

*Robinson Crusoe* was published in 1719, and was received everywhere with delight. "Something to read," something light and entertaining, was badly wanted at this time, especially in the homes of the middle class—the clergy, the doctors, the merchants, and the tradesmen. Most people had bound volumes of *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*, which had been read and reread. They had *The Pilgrim's Progress*, but they had known that from their infancy. They did not much care for Dryden or Pope, and the older books were still out of fashion. *Robinson Crusoe*, so fresh, so simple, so exciting, was indeed a treasure.

Defoe was not quite pleased when he found that his book was being praised chiefly as interesting and exciting fiction. He had always maintained that he wrote nothing that was not true in fact, and that his chief purpose was always to improve the minds of his readers. He had written in one of his works:

This supplying a story by invention is certainly a most scandalous crime, and yet very little regarded in that part. It is a sort of lying that makes a great hole in the heart, in which by degrees a habit of lying enters in. Such a man comes quickly up to a total disregarding the truth of what he says, looking upon it as a trifle, a thing of no import, whether any story he tells be true or not.

No one who has read *Robinson Crusoe* would charge Defoe with having written a book likely to have a bad influence. It gives a splendid example of courage and faith and endurance



and that very British virtue of sticking stubbornly to a task and refusing to know when one is beaten. But it is difficult to believe that he wrote it, as he said he did, as an allegory of his own life, "the beautiful representation of a life of unexampled misfortunes, and of a variety not to be met with in this world." It is just a fine story, and it is as a fine story that its thousands of readers, from Defoe's day to our own, have received it.

Yet there have been some people in whom it has roused more serious thoughts, and one of these is the poet William Cowper, of whom we shall speak by and by. It must have been after reading *Robinson Crusoe* that he wrote, in 1782, his *Verses supposed to be written by Alexander Selkirk*, which begin:

I am monarch of all I survey,  
My right there is none to dispute;  
From the centre all round to the sea,  
I am lord of the fowl and the brute.  
Oh, solitude! where are the charms  
That sages have seen in thy face?  
Better dwell in the midst of alarms,  
Than reign in this horrible place.

I am out of humanity's reach,  
I must finish my journey alone;  
Never hear the sweet music of speech;  
I start at the sound of my own.  
The beasts that roam over the plain,  
My form with indifference see;  
They are so unacquainted with man  
Their tameness is shocking to me.

Defoe was so much encouraged by the success of *Robinson Crusoe* that he wrote, in four months, a sequel to it, called *The Further Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*. But this had in it nothing of the remarkable quality of the first book. It is only an ordinary tale, without the touch of genius that transformed its forerunner. For another twelve years—that is, until he was over seventy—Defoe worked with the same energy and determination that he had shown all his life. He gave up journalism, and wrote more books after the fashion of *Robinson Crusoe*—that is, lives of various persons, which were mainly



fictions, but had a small foundation of fact—*Moll Flanders*, *Roxana*, *Captain Singleton*, *Memoirs of a Cavalier*. He wrote also *A Journal of the Plague Year*, which is so realistic that it almost seems that it must have been written by someone who had lived through the Great Plague of 1665. All these are interesting and well-written works; but *Robinson Crusoe* remains Defoe's masterpiece.

## II. "GULLIVER'S TRAVELS"

The public that had received *Robinson Crusoe* with delight was ready for a great many more books of the same kind. There had never been so large a number of readers in the country as there was now. There were no very important events to take people's attention—at least, when the excitement of the South Sea Bubble had died away. The Court was dull; and everyone was getting a little tired of the sentimental plays, in imitation of Steele, that were still being produced at the theatres. So people of leisure were apt to find the time hang heavy on their hands; and this was especially the case in middle-class homes. Reading was the great diversion, if only suitable books could be found.

They must be light, entertaining books, for the readers of that day had not been trained to appreciate literature of a higher kind. The influence of Steele and Addison had brought about a great improvement in the manners and tastes of the middle class, but there was still a great deal to be done, especially among the girls and the women. To a girl of to-day these maidens of the 1720's and 1730's would seem almost unbelievably silly and sentimental and ignorant. They had no chance to be anything else. They had been taught—the most fortunate of them—to read and write and embroider, but they had learned nothing that would enlarge their minds or widen their interests. Their mothers could not help them, for they themselves knew no better than their daughters. Their fathers, who had felt the refining influences of literature and the coffee-



houses, do not seem to have troubled much about the education of the women-folk of their households. Steele and Addison had tried very hard to improve the position of women, but they had not been very successful. If a girl could read, and sign her name, and make a pudding, she was considered sufficiently educated; if she could embroider, and play an air on the spinet to her father in the evening as well, she was highly accomplished. There were, of course, beautiful and noble exceptions, but for the most part the women of these days were subject to all the disabilities that come with ignorance and narrow-mindedness.

*Robinson Crusoe* had appealed more especially to the fathers and brothers of English households, though the mothers and daughters had read it too. The next great story that was to come to them was being written in the lonely house in Ireland where the great genius, Dean Swift, was passing his sad and solitary days. "I live a country life in town," he wrote to one of his friends, "see nobody and go every day once to prayers, and hope in a few months to grow as stupid as the new situation of affairs will require." Stella and Rebecca Dingley lived quite near him, but their friendship was not as happy as it had been. Then in 1715 Esther Vanhomrigh came to Ireland. Her mother was dead, and the property she had left to her daughters was situated near Dublin. Swift knew that if Stella and Esther met his older friend would learn to think him faithless and unkind, and this added to his troubles.

He tried hard to do his duty. He held the cathedral services and preached many sermons. He was energetic in seeing that the building was well and carefully kept. The poor people round about, though they could not love him, respected him and were grateful for the alms he gave them. The money he distributed so liberally was saved from the expenses of his household, where he denied himself all luxuries, so that his visitors and his servants thought him mean and ungenerous, and it was often given with hard words and gibes that were long remembered. Years afterward men told stories that they



had heard from their fathers and mothers about the biting humour of "the Dane."

The long, lonely evenings were Swift's most unhappy time, and before many months were over he felt that he must begin some piece of work that would keep him from sitting and brooding over his cheerless lot; and so he began his best-known and perhaps his greatest work, *Gulliver's Travels*. It was written as a bitter attack upon the whole of the human race, and Swift put into it all the contempt and hatred that he felt for mankind in general. "I heartily hate and detest that animal called man," he once said, "though I heartily love John, Peter, Thomas, and so forth." But in some strange way it is possible to read the book—at least, the first two parts of it—as a pleasant story. If a reader did not know that the author meant to hold up mankind to scorn, it is quite possible that he would not find it out for himself. Almost at once *Gulliver's Travels* became a favourite story-book among the readers of the eighteenth century, and it is still a favourite story-book now, more than two hundred years later. Children especially have loved it. We wonder what Swift would have said if someone had told him that the book he worked at so savagely night after night in his big, lonely house would be the delight of many generations of boys and girls.

*Gulliver's Travels* gives, first, an account of the early life of the hero, Lemuel Gulliver, then tells how he was shipwrecked on the island of Lilliput, which was inhabited by a race of beings not six inches high. Gulliver was accounted an enormous giant among them, and the difficulties they had in lodging him and feeding him are most amusingly told.

They had found him lying asleep near the seashore, and had fixed him to the ground by means of many of their ropes passed over different parts of his body, and by his hair, which they had fastened to the ground. When he awoke he found he could not move.

I could only look upwards; the sun began to grow hot, and the light offended my eyes; I heard a confused noise about me, but



in the posture I lay could see nothing except the sky. In a little time I felt something alive moving on my left leg, which, advancing gently forward over my breast, came almost up to my chin; when, bending my eyes downwards as much as I could, I perceived it to be a human creature not six inches high, with a bow and arrow in his hands and a quiver at his back. In the meantime, I felt at least forty more of the same kind (as I conjectured) following the first. I was in the utmost astonishment, and roared so loud that they all ran back in a fright; and some of them, as I was afterwards told, were hurt with the falls they got by leaping from my sides upon the ground. However, they soon returned, and one of them, who ventured so far as to get a full sight of my face, lifting up his hands and eyes by way of admiration, cried out in a shrill, but distinct voice, "*Hekinah degul.*" The others repeated the same words several times, but then I knew not what they meant. I lay all this while, as the reader may believe, in great uneasiness. At length, struggling to get loose, I had the fortune to break the strings and wrench out the pegs that fastened my left arm to the ground; for, by lifting it up to my face, I discovered the methods they had taken to bind me. At the same time, with a violent pull which gave me excessive pain, I a little loosened the strings that tied down my hair on the left side, so that I was just able to turn my head about two inches. But the creatures ran off a second time before I could seize them; whereupon there was a great shout in a very shrill accent, and after it ceased I heard one of them cry aloud "*Tolgo phonac*"; when in an instant I felt about an hundred arrows discharged on my left hand, which pricked me like so many needles. . . . When this shower of arrows was over, I fell a-groaning with grief and pain; and then striving again to get loose, they discharged another volley, larger than the first, and some of them attempted with spears to stick me in the sides; but by good luck I had on me a buff jerkin which they could not pierce.

So Gulliver resolved to lie still and wait until night, and then try to release himself.

But fortune disposed otherwise of me. When the people observed I was quiet they discharged no more arrows; but by the noise I heard I knew their numbers increased; and about four yards from me, over against my right ear, I heard a knocking for above an hour, like that of people at work, when, turning my head that way as well as the pegs and strings would permit me, I saw a stage erected, about a foot and a half from the ground, capable of holding four of the inhabitants, with two or three ladders to mount it; from whence one of them, who seemed to be a person of quality, made me a long speech, whereof I understood not one syllable.



This person commanded the strings that fastened the left side of Gulliver's head to be cut, so that he could see what was going on, and

he acted every part of an orator, and I could observe many periods of threatenings, and others of promises, pity, and kindness. I answered in a few words, but in the most submissive manner, lifting up my left hand and both my eyes to the sun as calling him for a witness; and being almost famished with hunger, having not eaten a morsel for some hours before I left the ship, I found the demands of nature so strong upon me that I could not forbear showing my impatience . . . by putting my finger frequently to my mouth to signify that I wanted food. The *Hurgo* (for so they call a great lord, as I afterwards learnt) understood me very well. He descended from the stage, and commanded that several ladders should be applied to my sides, on which above a hundred of the inhabitants mounted, and walked towards my mouth, laden with baskets full of meat which had been provided and sent thither by the King's orders, upon the first intelligence he received of me. I observed there was the flesh of several animals, but I could not distinguish them by the taste. There were shoulders, legs, and loins, shaped like those of mutton and very well dressed, but smaller than the wings of a lark. I ate them by two or three at a mouthful, and took three loaves at a time, about the bigness of musket bullets. They supplied me as fast as they could, showing a thousand marks of wonder and astonishment at my bulk and appetite. I then made another sign that I wanted drink. They found by my eating that a small quantity would not suffice me; and being a most ingenious people, they slung up, with great dexterity, one of their largest hogsheads, then rolled it towards my hand, and beat out the top. I drank it off at a draught—which I might well do, for it did not hold a pint and tasted like a small wine of Burgundy, but much more delicious. They brought me a second hogshead, which I drank in the same manner and made signs for more; but they had none to give me. When I had performed these wonders they shouted for joy, and danced upon my breast, repeating several times, as they did at first, "*Hekinah degul.*" They made me a sign that I should throw down the two hogsheads, but first warning the people below to stand out of the way, crying aloud "*Borach mevolah*"; and when they saw the vessels in the air there was a universal shout of "*Hekinah degul.*"

Gulliver was provided with a home, and set at liberty, upon his promising to do no one any harm, and not to try to escape; and many more amusing things happened.



About two or three days before I was set at liberty . . . there arrived an express to inform his majesty that some of his subjects, riding near the place where I was first taken up, had seen a great black substance lying on the ground, very oddly shaped, extending its edges round, as wide as his majesty's bedchamber, and rising up in the middle as high as a man; that it was no living creature as they at first apprehended, for it lay on the grass without motion, and some of them had walked round it several times; that by mounting upon each other's shoulders they had got to the top, which was flat and even, and stamping upon it they found that it was hollow within; that they humbly conceived it might be something belonging to the man-mountain; and if his majesty pleased they would undertake to bring it with only five horses. I presently knew what they meant, and was glad at heart to receive this intelligence. It seems, upon my reaching the shore after our shipwreck, I was in such confusion, that before I came to the place where I went to sleep, my hat, which I had fastened with a string to my head while I was rowing, and had stuck on all the time I was swimming, fell off after I came to land; the string, as I conjecture, breaking by some accident, which I never observed, but thought my hat had been lost at sea. I entreated his imperial majesty to give orders that it might be brought to me as soon as possible, describing to him the use and nature of it. And the next day the wagoners arrived with it, but not in a very good condition. They had bored two holes in the brim, within an inch and a half of the edge, and fastened two hooks in the holes; these hooks were tied by a long cord to the harness, and thus my hat was dragged along for about half an English mile. But the ground in that country being extremely smooth and level, it received less damage than I expected.

The second book of *Gulliver's Travels* tells of the voyage to Brobdingnag, a country peopled with giants who seemed "as tall as an ordinary spire-steeple." Here the grass in the fields was twenty feet high and the corn forty feet, the rats were the size of a large mastiff, the wasps as big as partridges, and the larks nine times as large as a full-grown turkey. Gulliver was found by a farmer, who took him in a box to the market and there exhibited him for money. The farmer's little daughter, named Glumdalclitch, was very kind to him. She called him Grildrig, or "the little man," and did all she could to make him happy; but he had a hard life, for his master, seeing that he could make a great profit by exhibiting him, carried



him about the country, and made him show off all his accomplishments to the crowds that gathered to see him. At length the Queen heard of him and commanded him to be brought to Court, and then the worst of his troubles were over. The Queen bought him from his master, and kept Glumdalclitch to look after him.

I had learnt in my youth to play a little upon the spinet. Glumdalclitch kept one in her chamber, and a master attended twice a week to teach her. I call it a spinet, because it somewhat resembled that instrument and was played upon in the same manner. A fancy came into my head that I would entertain the king and queen with an English tune upon this instrument. But this appeared extremely difficult, for the spinet was nearly sixty feet long, each key being almost a foot wide, so that with my arms extended I could not reach to above five keys, and to press them down required a good, smart stroke with my fist, which would be too great a labour and to no purpose. The method I contrived was this: I prepared two round sticks, about the bigness of common cudgels; they were thicker at one end than the other, and I covered the thicker end with a piece of mouse's skin, that by rapping on them I might neither damage the tops of the keys nor interrupt the sound. Before the spinet a bench was placed, about four feet below the keys, and I was put upon the bench. I ran sideling upon it, that way and this, as fast as I could, banging the proper keys with my two sticks, and made a shift to play a jig, to the great satisfaction of both their majesties; but it was the most violent exercise that I ever underwent, and yet I could not strike above sixteen keys, nor consequently play the bass and treble together, as other artists do, which was a great disadvantage to my performance.

The last two books of *Gulliver's Travels* have none of the charm of the first two. Swift's temper when he wrote them had become so dark and savage that the books are painful and unpleasant to read. We will leave them, as most people do leave them now, unread.

The remaining years of Swift's life were terrible in their gloom and misery. In 1728 Stella died. Esther Vanhomrigh had died years before. Nearly all Swift's friends had been driven from him by the harsh, imperious temper, that had grown worse as he had grown older. He was left to himself in his solitary home. His health declined, his fits of melancholy



grew deeper, and at length his brain gave way. By 1741 he had become insane, and in this state he lived for four more years; then, in October 1745, quietly and painlessly, he died.

### III. THE NOVELS OF RICHARDSON

*Gulliver's Travels* was read by almost everyone, yet it was not exactly the book for which the great middle-class public was waiting. But that book was coming, although the young ladies who were sighing for something to read were to be grown up and have daughters of their own before it appeared. We will go back now, and learn something of the life of the man who was to write it, and see how he had been preparing himself for his work.

About thirty years before this time, soon after William and Mary had begun to reign over England, there lived in London a respectable and hard-working joiner named Richardson. He had a large family, and one member of it was a boy named Samuel. Samuel grew up to be a quiet, serious, well-behaved lad, who did not much care for playing with other boys, but preferred the company of grown-up people, and especially of ladies. He was interested in all sorts of subjects that boys of his age do not usually concern themselves with. Later in his life he said:

I was an early favourite with all the young women of taste and reading in the neighbourhood. Half a dozen of them, when met to work with their needles, used, when they got a book they liked, and thought I should, to borrow me to read it to them. . . . I was not more than thirteen when some of these young women, unknown to each other, having a high opinion of my taciturnity, revealed to me their love secrets, in order to induce me to give them copies to write after or correct, for answers to their lovers' letters; nor did any one of them ever know that I was secretary to the others.

Thus this quiet, solemn little boy learned a great deal about love-letters. He read the letters that the young men wrote to their sweethearts, and wrote the sweethearts' answers according



to the directions they gave him, and this experience he found very useful in the days that were to come.

Samuel grew up into a quiet, serious, well-behaved youth, and at the proper age he was apprenticed to a printer of Fleet Street. Here he worked hard and won his master's favour, and in due time he married his master's daughter, as industrious apprentices in stories usually do. In due time, also, he set up in business for himself and became the owner of a prosperous printing-works in Salisbury Court when he was little more than thirty years old. He had some heavy troubles to bear—five out of his six children died while they were still babies, and in 1731 his wife died also; but he married again the next year, and had four more children, who seem to have been stronger. In 1739 he was rich enough to buy a comfortable house at Hampstead, where he spent much of his leisure time, though he still had apartments in the building where his printing was carried on. His chief trouble was indigestion, which was brought on by nervous attacks from which he had suffered all his life, and which made him a little particular about his food, and inclined to be irritable; but his wife took good care of him, and on the whole he was very well content with his lot.

He was a kindly, industrious little man, sincerely religious and anxious to do his duty. He was short and plump, wore a fair wig, and dressed neatly and carefully. For thirty years he went on conscientiously with his daily round of business, finding his chief pleasure in writing "honest dedications" to the books that he printed. His friends admired these dedications very much; they admired both the virtuous sentiments and the flowing, well-turned sentences in which they were expressed.

One day two of his friends, who were publishers, suggested that he should write "a little volume of Letters in a common style, on such subjects as might be of use to those country readers who were unable to indite for themselves." The idea delighted the little man. All his life he had loved letter-writing,



and he spent a good part of his time in "inditing" long epistles to various correspondents. He began at once to think about the proposed book, and soon he saw that it would give him an opportunity to set forward the moral and religious principles that he valued so highly. He consulted his two friends. " ' Will it be any harm,' I said, ' in a piece you want written so low, if we should instruct them how they should think and act in common cases, as well as indite? ' They were the more urgent with me to begin the volume for this hint. I set about it."

When he had really entered on the work his fluent pen could scarcely be controlled. It almost ran away with him. He went on and on with ever-increasing delight, and became so interested in what he was writing that he forgot entirely that his first idea had been simply to instruct ignorant people how to write a letter. By and by he began to compose " two or three letters to instruct handsome girls who were obliged to go out to service, as we phrase it, how to avoid the snares that might be laid against their virtue." This reminded him of a story someone had once told him about a young girl who " had been taken at twelve years of age, for the sweetness of her manners, and modesty, and for an understanding above her years," into the service of a wealthy lady. Here, " improving daily in beauty, modesty, and genteel and good behaviour," she had gained the love of all who knew her. She had many temptations to dishonesty, deceit, immodesty, and folly, but she resisted them all, and was always prudent, sensible, and virtuous. She married, in the end, her mistress's son, and in her new position she " behaved herself with so much dignity, sweetness, and humility that she made herself beloved of everybody, and even by her husband's relations, who at first despised her, and now had the blessings both of rich and poor, and the love of her husband."

This story gave Richardson such pleasure in remembrance that he left for a time the book he was working at and began to write out the story of this model servant-maid, whom he



called Pamela, in the form of letters to her parents. "Little did I think at first," he says, "of making one, much less two volumes of it." He thought that if he wrote the story it might introduce a new kind of book, and help the cause of religion and virtue.

*Pamela* was begun on November 10, 1739, and finished on January 10, 1740. Its success was startling. The whole country went mad over it. Clergymen praised it in their sermons; ladies almost without number wrote to Richardson thanking him for his charming, his elevating, his wonderful book. Pope said that it would do more good than many volumes of sermons. Fashionable ladies carried it in their hands when they went to places of amusement, to show that they were in the fashion, and they took care that everybody should see it. At the village of Slough, we are told, the inhabitants gathered for many evenings round the blacksmith's forge, while the blacksmith read *Pamela* to them aloud. When he came to the end, where she had become a great lady, beloved by all, his audience were so delighted that they rushed to the church and insisted on ringing the bells.

No one was more surprised at *Pamela's* success than Richardson. He had written it without thought of fame or profit, but he thoroughly enjoyed his triumph when it came. He listened with intense satisfaction to the praises that met him on every side. He still, as in his boyhood, preferred the society of ladies to that of gentlemen, and it was the ladies who gathered round him, came to his select tea-parties, called him "dear Mr Richardson," and declared that *Pamela* was the greatest and most edifying work the world had ever seen.

It is not quite that, but it is a wonderful book. It shows a knowledge of human nature far above that of most writers before him. It is very long drawn out, and if you tried to read it you would most likely find it very dull and wonder what made the people of that day like it so much. To them it was the ideal book, and they read it, and cried over it, and talked about it, men and women alike.



The little printer was not spoiled by all the praise he received. He grew a little vain, perhaps, and a little irritable toward those—there were some, though not very many—who laughed at *Pamela* and declared that the morality it taught was false, and simply meant “be good, and you will be rewarded.” He would have been still more vain if he had understood fully what a great thing he had done. He had introduced the modern novel. There had been before him many writers of stories and romances, but not one who had taken ordinary everyday people in their ordinary everyday lives and of these made a story with a clear and definite plot, who had taken pains to represent character as well as incident, and to search out the motives and describe the feelings of the people he wrote about in full detail.

The proof that Richardson was not spoiled came when, in 1748, he published his next book, *Clarissa, or The History of a Young Lady*. This is a far finer story than *Pamela*. Clarissa Harlowe is a real heroine, and bears the terrible sufferings that fall upon her with a steadfastness and courage that make all readers love her. The closing scenes of the book are heart-rending. Not only sentimental young ladies of the eighteenth century, but all sorts of readers of a far later age, have wept bitterly over the sorrows of Clarissa. The story is a very long one and was at first published in seven volumes. The first two came in 1747, and two more in April 1748. At the end of the fourth volume Clarissa was left in a terrible state of distress, and it seemed plain that more trials were before her. Many readers feared that Richardson had decided she should die. Letters poured in upon him entreating him to spare her. People talked to one another of what would be her fate, and debated the chances of her being delivered from her troubles and made happy again as if she were some famous and well-beloved person whose death would be a national bereavement. Everyone waited in terrible suspense for the closing volumes.

Alas! when they came in December it was found that Clarissa must die. Richardson was too true an artist to alter



what seemed to him the right and necessary course of his story to please the people who wanted a happy ending. So poor Clarissa died, and all England wept for her.

In his next book, *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1754), Richardson tried to draw a picture of an ideal gentleman, but he was not as successful here as he had been in his other works. Sir Charles is too perfect to be human or likeable; he is, indeed, what he has often been called—a prig.

Richardson's health was now failing. He wrote no more novels, but only various "Reflections" and "Meditations" on moral subjects. He was still the idol of middle-class society, and lived very happily at his new house in Parson's Green, Fulham. The nervous attacks to which all his life he had been subject increased in severity, and he died, from a paralytic stroke, on July 4, 1761.

#### IV. THE NOVELS OF FIELDING

Among those who laughed at *Pamela* and would not agree that Richardson was a great moral teacher was a certain young writer named Henry Fielding. That he should do so was small wonder, for no two men could have been less alike than he and the quiet, nervous, formal little printer. Fielding was a young man of thirty-three, big and strong and reckless, large-hearted and large-minded, with a great zest for life, and a hearty, rollicking humour. He belonged to a good family, of East Stour, in Dorsetshire, and had been educated at Eton and at Leyden University. He came to London when he was twenty-two years old, and began to live the hard-working, jovial life of a young man who has his living to earn, but is determined to take his pleasure also.

He began by writing comedies and burlesques, and most of these were fairly successful, so that he earned enough to live in comfort, but he was careless and extravagant and always in debt, though his money troubles did not weigh very heavily upon him. In 1734 he married, and the next year his wife's



mother died and left her a considerable legacy, so the two left London and took the house at East Stour where Fielding had spent his boyhood. In less than a year all their money was gone, and they came back to London lodgings and hard work once more.

Fielding now tried a new venture. He formed a company of actors, took the Little Theatre in the Haymarket, and produced several plays, but his theatre was closed when in 1737 a Licensing Act was passed that allowed only two theatres in London. Then he decided to become a lawyer, studied at the Middle Temple, and in 1740 was called to the Bar. Meantime he had been writing articles and essays for different newspapers in order to gain a living, and he and his wife had gone through some hard times.

When Richardson's *Pamela* appeared Fielding at once saw the ridiculous side of the heroine's long-drawn-out adventures. He mocked at the book gaily, and soon he saw how easy it would be to write a parody of this much-praised story. All the town would be likely to read this parody, if only to increase their indignation that it should have been written. He set to work. He invented a brother, Joseph, for Pamela and a female relation for her husband, who had been known in Richardson's story as Mr B—. Fielding gave the name in full as Mr Booby, and called his own heroine Lady Booby. Joseph he made the servant of Lady Booby, who was to tempt him to wrong-doing by her favour, as Mr Booby had tried to tempt Pamela.

The book began as a farce, and the first chapters were written in the highest spirits, and ridiculed *Pamela* in a way that could not fail to make everybody laugh. But soon Fielding grew interested in Joseph and his fortunes. He forgot all about Lady Booby as other characters that he liked far better crowded into the story. One of them, Parson Adams, he loved, and almost all Fielding's readers have loved him too. We are told that

Mr Abraham Adams was an excellent scholar. He was a perfect master of the Greek and Latin languages; to which he added a



great share of knowledge in the Oriental tongues; and could read and translate French, Italian and Spanish. He had applied many years to the most severe study, and had treasured up a fund of learning rarely to be met with in a university. He was besides a man of good sense, good parts, and good nature; but was at the same time as entirely ignorant of the ways of this world as an infant just entered into it could possibly be. As he had never any intention to deceive, so he never suspected such a design in others. He was generous, friendly and brave to an excess, but simplicity was his characteristic.

This good man had a wife and six children, and a living that brought him in twenty-three pounds a year. He sets out, with nine shillings and threepence halfpenny in his pocket, on a journey to London, where he hopes to arrange for the publishing of three volumes of his sermons, but half-way there he discovers that he has left the sermons at home, and contentedly returns, reflecting, "This disappointment may perhaps be for my good." He is taken in by every clever rogue he meets upon the road; but he has a valiant spirit, and lays about him sturdily with his famous crabstick when his fellow-travellers are attacked. We see him in homely dress and in ridiculous situations—leaning over the rail of the inn gallery smoking his blackened pipe, "a nightcap drawn over his wig, and a short greatcoat which half covered his cassock"; or rising drenched from a tub of cold water into which he has fallen through a practical joke played upon him by the host of the inn. Yet he keeps always a simple, unconscious dignity, and his true goodness and his sweetness of temper are shown in everything he does, so that when we laugh at him we laugh as we should at a dearly loved friend whose little oddities only add to his charm.

Joseph, whom Fielding had meant to make a foolish, pretty, brainless fellow, grew, as the tale went on, into a lad of character and energy. After the first few chapters we hear nothing more of Pamela until we come to the end of the book, when she appears at the marriage of Joseph (who is discovered not to be her brother) to the beautiful Fanny (who turns out to be Pamela's sister), to whom he has been true through all his



trials and temptations. At the wedding Pamela so far forgets herself as to join with her husband in laughing in church, and is severely and publicly rebuked by Parson Adams.

The book is full of fun and high spirits, and when it appeared in 1742, with the title of *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and his Friend, Mr Abraham Adams*, it was read by all the town. One half of the readers laughed heartily over it, and among these were many who had cried over and admired *Pamela*; the other half were too indignant at the ridicule of "dear Mr Richardson" to see anything good in the new book. For although Fielding had not made *Joseph Andrews* a complete parody of *Pamela*, as he had intended to do, there were still a great many passages that made fun of that great work. Poor Richardson was very much annoyed and could not help showing it. He might have comforted himself with the thought that Fielding's book, although it was a success, had had nothing like the praise or the popularity that had been gained by his own.

Fielding himself was more than satisfied. He had set out to write the book in a merry, mischievous mood, hoping that it might bring a substantial sum to help him in the hard task of earning a living. It had done a great deal more than that. It had shown him that here was something he could do well—better than any of the many things he had tried before in his hard-working life. He could write a novel; and if he could write one he could write another. For some time he made no use of this piece of knowledge that he had gained, but went on with his work as a lawyer, his writing for newspapers, his tracts and his essays.

The years that followed the appearance of *Joseph Andrews* were in many ways dark years for Fielding. So far he had been strong and healthy, but now the attacks of gout which were to torment him for the rest of his life began. He was still poor, depending for his living on what he could earn from day to day, and although while he was young and reckless this had not greatly troubled him, it began to weigh upon his mind now



that he was approaching middle age. His wife, whom he loved very dearly, fell ill, and after months of suffering she died in November 1744. From this blow Fielding never quite recovered. It is true that, two years later, he married her maid, Mary Daniel, but this was chiefly because she had loved her mistress devotedly, and Fielding loved her for his dead Charlotte's sake. She made him a good and faithful wife, and helped him to bear the sorrow which he never forgot.

In 1748 Fielding was made a Justice of the Peace for Westminster and for Middlesex, most likely as a reward for political papers that he had written. This meant much hard work, with not much money as a reward, but Fielding did his duty faithfully, without harshness or partiality. He was large-hearted enough to know that people often sin, not because they are really wicked, but because they are unfortunate in their surroundings and way of life; and when such people were brought to his court he understood and knew how to deal with them. Soon people began to talk about Justice Fielding as a man who could be trusted to deal fairly and firmly with any case brought before him, and was doing his best to help those who were poor and miserable.

Yet he found some time in his busy life for writing, and in 1749, seven years after *Joseph Andrews*, came his second novel, *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling*. The hero of this story is something like Fielding himself—generous, reckless, large-hearted, falling into all sorts of thoughtless scrapes and sins, but never selfish or mean or cruel. He has an adventurous life, goes into all kinds of society, and meets people of every class. There never was a book fuller of life and variety than *Tom Jones*. There are many characters in it that will always be remembered. There is Squire Allworthy, wise and kind, the ideal of a good man; Sophia Western, “adorned with all the charms in which nature can array her, bedecked with beauty, youth, sprightliness, innocence”; there is Blifil, hypocritical, mean, and cowardly—just the kind of man that Fielding hated most.



The book was at once successful. Some of Richardson's admirers exclaimed against it, and declared it to be coarse and immoral, but the public in general read it eagerly and praised it for its liveliness, its truth, and its humour. Fielding was encouraged to go on writing, and, although his health was failing, and his work as a magistrate was increasing so as to make large demands upon his time, by the end of 1751 he had finished his third novel, which he called *Amelia*. The heroine of this story is drawn from his first wife, and she is even more delightful and lovable than Sophia Western. *Amelia* is less lively than *Tom Jones* and not so full of incident and adventure, but it is mellow and more tender, and it has a true pathos, without any touch of sentimentality.

After *Amelia* Fielding wrote no more novels. His gout, which had given him much suffering for many years, grew worse, and in 1754 he started, with his wife and daughter, on a voyage to Lisbon, in the hope that his health might be improved. He was ill and wasted, but his courage had not gone, nor the high spirits that had carried him through so many troubles. On the ship he wrote his *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon*, which is a shrewd and delightful piece of writing, not at all like the work of a dying man. Yet such it was. The journey brought no such good effects as had been hoped for, and at Lisbon, in October 1754, Henry Fielding died, and was buried in the English cemetery of the town.



---

## Chapter XXV

### THE BEGINNINGS OF THE NEW POETRY

#### I. JAMES THOMSON

**A**T the time when *Gulliver's Travels* had just been published and all the town was talking about it there appeared a little book of only a few pages containing a poem called *Winter*. It had been written by a young Scottish poet who had lately come to seek his fortune in London. For a time no one took much notice of it. Then a few people began to read it, and first one and then another grew enthusiastic over it, and went about telling their friends they really must read this new poem, which was quite unlike anything that Pope or Swift or Gay or any of the poets of the day had ever written. In fashionable drawing-rooms and in the coffee-houses *Winter* began to be talked about almost as much as *Gulliver's Travels*, and soon the booksellers were receiving many orders for the small volume, and fathers were taking it home to read aloud to their families in the evenings. It was, as its first admirers had said, so very different from the fashionable poetry. The poets most in favour loved to write about the life of the town, about man as he could be seen in drawing-rooms, or coffee-houses, or going about his business. They talked very wisely and wittily about his virtues and his failings, and all this they set out brilliantly in smooth, highly polished couplets. But this young Scottish poet had left the town for the country, had looked at the earth and the sky and the trees, the birds and beasts and flowers, and had described what he saw in the blank verse that had gone out of fashion with Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

It was rather startling, and many readers were not quite sure whether they liked it, or whether they ought not to be



ashamed at feeling an interest in such trivial things as clouds and trees and robin-redbreasts. We must remember that they knew nothing about the early English poetry with its deep, strong love of nature—of the flowers and the birds and the fields and the sweetness of spring. They had heard Swift describe a May morning:

Now hardly here and there a hackney coach  
 Appearing, show'd the ruddy morn's approach, . . .  
 The slipshod 'prentice from his master's door  
 Had pared the dirt and sprinkled round the floor,  
 Now Moll had whirl'd her mop with dext'rous airs,  
 Prepared to scrub the entry and the stairs.  
 The youth with broomy stumps began to trace  
 The kennel's edge, where wheels had worn the place.  
 The small-coal man was heard with cadence deep,  
 Till drown'd in shriller notes of chimney-sweep;  
 Duns at his lordship's gate began to meet,  
 And brickdust Moll had scream'd through half the street.

But they had never heard Chaucer tell how "in the dawenyng" of a May day

I was wak'd  
 With smalë foulës a gret hepe,  
 That had affrayed me out of my slepe  
 Through noyse and swetnesse of her song. . . .  
 For al my chambre gan to rynge  
 Through synging of her armonye. . . .  
 And through the glas the sunnë shon  
 Upon my bed with bryghtë bemes,  
 With many gladë, gilden stremes;  
 And eek the welkin was so fair,  
 Blew, bryght, clerë was the air.

They knew nothing of Shakespeare's "yellow sands" and "wild waves," or of his "daisies pied and violets blue and lady-smocks all silver-white," that "paint the meadows with delight." They had not even read Herrick's lovely verses "of brookes, of blossomes, birds and bowers," or George Herbert's "Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright."

All this, their great English heritage, they had neglected, and almost forgotten; and so *Winter* came to them as something entirely new. But they could not help being interested in such descriptions as that of the falling of the snow:



## THE BEGINNINGS OF THE NEW POETRY

---

Through the hushed air the whitening shower descends,  
At first thin wavering; till at last the flakes  
Fall broad, and wide, and fast, dimming the day  
With a continual flow. The cherished fields  
Put on their winter robe of purest white.  
'Tis brightness all; save where the new snow melts  
Along the mazy current. Low the woods  
Bow their hoar head; and, ere the languid sun  
Faint from the west emits his evening ray,  
Earth's universal face, deep-hid and chill,  
Is one wild dazzling waste, that buries wide  
The works of man.

Or this, about the robin:

One alone,  
The redbreast, sacred to the household gods,  
Wisely regardful of the embroiling sky,  
In joyless fields and thorny thickets leaves  
His shivering mates, and pays to trusted man  
His annual visit. Half-afraid, he first  
Against the window beats; then, brisk, alights  
On the warm hearth; then, hopping o'er the floor,  
Eyes all the smiling family askance,  
And pecks, and starts, and wonders where he is—  
Till, more familiar grown, the table-crumbs  
Attract his slender feet.

Gradually the poem crept into fame. The critics praised it, and Pope himself approved. Great noblemen patronized the writer, and the ordinary citizens found more and more beauties in the poem at each reading. Truth to tell, some of them were getting a little tired of the polished perfection of the couplet as Pope and his fellows wrote it. Perfection, as we all know, does become tiresome after a time, and the loveliest tune, played continuously, loses its effect. Then, although the people of that age agreed with Pope that "the proper study of mankind is man," some of them—not very many yet, but a few—were beginning to think that there were other things also worth writing and reading about. The Englishman's love of the country, and the fresh air, and all the beauties of his green and pleasant land had never really died; only in the town-dwellers it had grown weak. Thomson's poem came to many like a breath of country air in a crowded street, and when, next year, a second poem, *Summer*, appeared,



it was received at once with delight. It described all sorts of country sights and activities that were strange to the London citizen, and that he took great pleasure in reading about. Very few Londoners had seen a sheep-washing and shearing, and Thomson's description of these country ceremonies was followed with interest and delight. He tells how "the troubled flocks" are driven to where "the mazy-running brook forms a deep pool," and how with "clamour much of men and boys and dogs" they are plunged into it; how they come out "heavy and dripping," and spread themselves in the sun to dry, while they fill the country round with their incessant bleating and loud complaints; and how at last they are all gathered in the pens.

And ranged in lusty rows  
 The shepherds sit, and whet the sounding shears.  
 The housewife waits to roll her fleecy stores,  
 With all her gay-drest maids attending round.  
 One, chief in gracious dignity enthroned,  
 Shines o'er the rest, the pastoral queen, and rays  
 Her smiles, sweet-beaming, on her shepherd-king;  
 While the glad circle round them yield their souls  
 To festive mirth, and wit that knows no gall.  
 Meantime, their joyous task goes on apace;  
 Some mingling stir the melted tar, and some,  
 Deep on the new-shorn vagrant's heaving side  
 To stamp the master's cypher ready stand;  
 Others the unwilling wether drag along;  
 And, glorying in his might, the sturdy boy  
 Holds by the twisted horns the indignant ram.  
 Behold where bound, and of its robes bereft  
 By needy man, that all-depending lord,  
 How meek, how patient, the mild creature lies!  
 What softness in its melancholy face,  
 What dumb complaining innocence appears!  
 Fear not, ye gentle tribes, 'tis not the knife  
 Of horrid slaughter that is o'er you waved;  
 No, 'tis the tender swain's well-guided shears,  
 Who having now, to pay his annual care,  
 Borrowed your fleece, to you a cumbrous load,  
 Will send you bounding to your hills again.

Next year came *Spring* and two years later *Autumn*, and then these four poems were published together and called *The*



*Seasons*. Thomson wrote other poems—*The Castle of Indolence*, written in stanzas like those of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, and *Liberty*, and *Rule, Britannia!* which all of us know. He wrote also plays, but not very good ones. It is for *The Seasons* that we remember him, and it is because he took the first step toward bringing English poetry back to a freer and more natural style that he has a great place in English literature.

## II. GRAY AND COLLINS

It seemed for a long time as if no other poets would follow Thomson's example and that the new style of writing that he had introduced would die out. For ten years after *The Seasons* no important poem was published except Samuel Johnson's *London*, which was in the old style, not in the new. Perhaps one reason for this was that a great part of England was at this time deeply concerned with religious matters. John and Charles Wesley and their friend George Whitefield had begun their great work, and were preaching all over the country, and many people were being converted to the Methodism that they taught. The Church, that had grown idle and careless, saw what was being done and was roused, and among Church people too came a great revival of religion and a great concern for religious things. Even those who did not feel this fervour themselves felt that a new seriousness had come into the national life and were influenced by it. Most of the poetry that was read was religious poetry. A great many hymns were written by Whitefield and the two Wesleys, and many of these—*Hark! the Herald Angels sing*, *Jesu, Lover of my Soul*, *Soldiers of Christ arise*, etc.—are still commonly sung to-day.

There is only one of the longer religious poems that we need mention, and that is *The Complaint, or Night Thoughts on Life, Death and Immortality*. It was written by a clergyman, Thomas Young, who was sixty-two years old, and it was immensely popular in its day. Other writers followed Young's example,



and two or three works of this kind were to be found on the bookshelves of nearly every family, even among the poorer people of the country.

It was not until 1747 that there was any sign that Thomson's example was going to be followed, and in that year came poems from two different writers. One was William Collins, a young poet who had lately left Oxford and had come to try his fortunes in London. He published a small volume of *Odes*, beautiful and musical and full of a love of nature, and written in a measure that sounded strange to ears accustomed to the rhymed couplet. Here are some verses from the *Ode to Evening*:

Then lead, calm votaress, where some sheety lake  
Cheers the lone heath, or some time-hallowed pile,  
Or upland fallows grey  
Reflect its last cool gleam.

Or if chill blustering winds, or driving rain,  
Forbid my willing feet, be mine the hut  
That, from the mountain's side,  
Views wilds and swelling floods,

And hamlets brown, and dim-discovered spires;  
And hears their simple bell, and marks o'er all  
Thy dewy fingers draw  
The gradual dusky veil.

The other poet was Thomas Gray, a fellow of Pembroke College, Cambridge. His poem *On a Distant Prospect of Eton College* had been written several years before, but kept unpublished. It begins:

Ye distant spires, ye antique towers,  
That crown the watery glade,  
Where grateful Science still adores  
Her Henry's holy shade;  
And ye, that from the stately brow  
Of Windsor's heights th' expanse below  
Of grove, of lawn, of mead survey,  
Whose turf, whose shade, whose flowers among  
Wanders the hoary Thames along  
His silver-winding way.

Gray was a far greater poet than Collins, and he followed this early work with others even more beautiful. There is one



so well known and so often quoted that perhaps it has grown stale to some of us—the *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*. Yet surely there is nothing in our language very much more beautiful than those opening verses that describe, so quietly, the sweet peace of a country evening.

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,  
The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea,  
The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,  
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,  
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,  
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,  
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds.

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower,  
The moping owl does to the moon complain  
Of such as, wandering near her secret bower,  
Molest her ancient solitary reign.

Less than twenty years lay between Pope's *Essay on Man* and the *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*. We have only to read a few lines from each of these poems to see how English poetry was changing. It was to change still more, slowly, yet always moving in the same direction toward freedom and nature.



---

## *Chapter XXVI*

### DR JOHNSON AND THE CLUB

#### I. THE GREAT DICTATOR

**I**F a visitor to London in the reign of Queen Anne or George I had wished to see all the most famous writers of the time he would have found them at one of the great houses where lords and ladies and all the people who made up high society met together. But a visitor who came fifty years later, in the early part of the reign of George III, would have had to seek them in far humbler places. If he had made the round of the city taverns he would most likely have found at one, or at several of them, a group of men whose names he had heard spoken with respect, almost reverence, as those of the greatest writers of their day. Coffee-houses were out of fashion now, and clubs that had special and regular meeting-places had come in. The men of letters had their clubs as the wits and the fine gentlemen and the lawyers had theirs, and usually these met at a city tavern. For in those days the men of letters were most of them poor. The Golden Age had ended, and poets no longer received pensions or high offices of State as a reward for their writings. They still tried to find patrons, but few patrons were as generous as were those of the earlier days. The visitor, as he looked round the group assembled in the tavern room, would have seen shabby coats and sometimes pinched, hungry faces; and if he had followed these men home he would have found that most of them lived in poor lodgings up city courts, or in comfortable middle-class houses. Only a few belonged to a higher class, though some had risen from poverty to better things through years of hard and painful toil.

The most famous of these clubs met at the Turk's Head, Gerrard Street, Soho. It was called the Club simply, its



founders disdaining to give it any further title. Its members met on one particular night in the week for a seven o'clock supper, and often they stayed until the early hours of the morning, talking and arguing, and telling stories of the things they had seen and done.

If we could have looked in at the Club on one of these evenings we should have seen sitting at the head of the table a big, powerful-looking man of nearly sixty, with heavy features, clumsy limbs, and wearing a full-bottomed wig. He was not very pleasant to look at, for his face was disfigured with scrofula and his eyes blinked continually. Nor did he try to improve his appearance by his dress, for his coat was worn and stained, his linen soiled, and his big hands in need of washing. He spoke in a deep, harsh voice, and his manner was brusque and overbearing. Yet everyone in the room paid him the greatest deference. When he spoke they all listened with eager attention; and nobody showed any resentment at the snubs which came, direct and heavy, on unfortunate speakers whose remarks did not please him. For this was the great Dr Johnson, the foremost man of letters of his day, and the most noted talker of that day or any other; the man whose sturdy independence of character matched the strength of his frame, and whose heart was as tender as his manners were rough.

We will leave the rest of the Club for a time while we look back upon the life of this famous Samuel Johnson, and see how he came to be the dictator of literary society and the great man of his age. His birth had not helped him, for he was the son of a poor Lichfield bookseller. He had had no rich friends or influential patron to help him on his way. He owed nothing, as we have seen, to a handsome appearance or pleasing manner. He had fought his way, step by step, by means of his great abilities and his sturdy character. It had been a long-drawn-out battle, but he had won it, and now he was enjoying his victory in his own way.

He had begun his education in his father's shop, prowling round the bookshelves, climbing on ladders and taking down



dusty volumes that for a long time no one had touched, and mastering their contents with astonishing quickness. His eyes were weak and short-sighted, but they managed to get through an enormous amount of reading. He went to school first at Lichfield and then at Stourbridge, and at both schools he astonished everybody by the quickness with which he learnt, and by his wonderful memory. He played no games, for in spite of his big frame and his great strength his health was bad, and he was subject to attacks of illness that for the time quite disabled him. Somehow or other he managed, when he was nineteen years old, to go up to Pembroke College, Oxford. The Master of the college said that Johnson was the best qualified of all the students he had ever known come to the university. But he did not stay long, for the Lichfield bookseller had little money to spare for his son's college expenses, and though Johnson tried to earn some for himself in various ways there was still not enough. He was so poor that sometimes he had to stay away from the lectures because he had no shoes to go in; and he left in 1729 without taking a degree.

After that he stayed in Lichfield for a time, and tried various ways of getting a living. He helped in his father's shop. He acted as usher in a school. He became assistant to another bookseller. He did some translations, and some original writing. While he was still without regular employment and almost penniless he married a widow nearly twice his age who seemed to most people to have little if any charm. She was, says David Garrick, who lived at Lichfield and knew her well, very fat, her cheeks were covered with rouge, her dress was tawdry, her manners affected and unpleasing. Yet twenty-five-year-old Samuel Johnson loved her devotedly. When she died he was heartbroken; and to the end of his life he kept the anniversary of her death with fasting and prayer.

Mrs Johnson possessed a few hundred pounds, and with this money they took a large house near Lichfield and set up a school. But only three pupils—of whom David Garrick was one—came to it, and in about a year and a half the small



fortune was almost all spent. Then Johnson determined to go to London and seek his fortune there. He had written the greater part of a tragedy, called *Irene*, which he hoped might be accepted by the manager of one of the London theatres; and with this in his pocket he set out in March 1737 to walk to London. His pupil, David Garrick, who intended to study law, came with him. Years afterward, when Garrick had become rich and famous as an actor and was a little inclined to forget his humble start in life, Johnson used to remind him of "the time when I came to London with twopence-halfpenny in my pocket, and thou, Davy, with three-halfpence in thine."

Then the hard struggle for a living began. Johnson did any sort of hack work that the booksellers would give him, dined for eightpence at poor and dirty eating-houses, slept in squalid lodgings up close city courts, or sometimes, when he had not the pence to pay for even the meanest lodging, walked the streets till morning. He learned what real hardship was, and remembered the lesson all his life; and when he heard people who were well fed and comfortably housed complaining of small discomforts and fanciful injuries he would burst out with some scornful and often rude rebuke, which quickly silenced them.

After a time he got regular work as a contributor to *The Gentleman's Magazine*, and in 1738 he published his poem *London*. For this a bookseller paid him ten guineas, which was a great sum for him in those days. The poem attracted a good deal of notice. Pope praised it, and made inquiries about the author, and several persons of influence, including Pope, declared that they were ready to give the man who could write such a poem a helping hand. But nothing came of all this, and Johnson still went on working hard at all sorts of jobs for the booksellers and earning a scanty living. Slowly, very slowly, his position improved. He began to plan a large piece of work which he hoped would bring in a substantial sum, and in 1747 he published *The Plan for a Dictionary of the English Language*. Dodsley, the bookseller who had suggested to him the idea of



writing a dictionary, agreed to give him £1575 for the work, out of which he had to pay several assistants. He expected to finish it in three years, but it took him seven, though he did a good deal of other work as well in that time. He was naturally idle and hated to sit down steadily to a laborious task, and only necessity could drive him on. When he was writing for periodicals the printer's boy was often at the door waiting for the 'copy' before Johnson could force himself to sit down and begin the essay he had promised should be ready at that time. To such a man the drudgery of making a dictionary was terrible. When he began it he thought with pleasure of the reading he would have to do in order to find quotations to illustrate the use of the words he defined, but very soon he realized that this must be sternly cut short or the work would never be done.

When Johnson was beginning his *Dictionary* he had tried to gain the patronage of Lord Chesterfield, one of the foremost noblemen of the day. He addressed the prospectus of the work to his lordship, who gave him a few guineas, but would not receive the awkward, uncouth scholar when he called at his town house. When, however, the *Dictionary* was nearly ready to be published, and people had begun to talk about it, Lord Chesterfield felt that people might wonder if it were not dedicated to himself since it was to him that the prospectus had been addressed. He therefore wrote two articles in *The World*, a fashionable magazine, in which he talked about the need for a dictionary, and paid Johnson many compliments. But Johnson was not the man to be treated in this way, and he answered the article by a letter which is one of the finest things he ever wrote. Here are two paragraphs from it:

Seven years, my lord, have now passed, since I waited in your outward rooms, or was repulsed from your door; during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties of which it is useless to complain; and have brought it at last to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a patron before. . . .



Is not a patron, my lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and when he has reached ground encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity, not to confess obligations, where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the public should consider me as owing that to a patron which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

The tone of the letter is melancholy, partly because Johnson was melancholy by disposition, and partly because of the heavy sorrow that had fallen on him three years before. His wife, who had joined him in London as soon as he was able to make a home for her, had died while he was still labouring at his *Dictionary*, and the praise that came to him when it was finished was worth little to him since she could not enjoy it with him.

The days of his worst poverty were over now, though he still had to work hard to earn a moderate income. In 1749 he had published his poem *The Vanity of Human Wishes*. In the same year, through the good offices of his old friend Garrick, his tragedy of *Irene* had been produced at Drury Lane, and though it was, on the whole, a failure it had brought Johnson a substantial sum of money. From March 1750 to March 1752 he wrote *The Rambler*, a paper published twice a week, and for each number he received two guineas.

A company of friends gathered round him, and he was able to enjoy the society he liked best. He hated fashionable drawing-rooms, and cut but a strange figure in them, though in the latter part of his life fine ladies sometimes beguiled him into attending their parties. The long years of poverty, when he had scarcely once eaten a meal in the company of well-mannered people, had made him careless, and sometimes really offensive in his habits. Lord Chesterfield called him "a respectable Hottentot, who throws his meat anywhere but down his throat," and another acquaintance declared that he laughed like a rhinoceros. But these people had not seen



Johnson at his best. They had never been among the small group of intimates who gathered round him in his happy moments, and heard him talk on subjects that really interested him. His talk was even better than his writing. That sometimes, in spite of the force and energy and sound thinking that went to the making of it, became stiff and cumbersome—even perhaps a little dull—with the long words and high-sounding phrases that he loved to use. But his talk had a salt and savour beyond that of any other man whose words have come down to us. It was homely and vigorous and direct, and full of a plain common sense that made all affectation and pretentiousness appear ridiculous. He had strong prejudices, and could see little good in those who held views opposite to his own. He was an ardent Tory and a sound Churchman, and the “Whig dogs” as he called them were only less hateful to him than were the Dissenters. Yet even those on whom his blows fell hardest forgave him, because there was no malice in the strokes, and because, in spite of themselves, the sufferers had to own that there was usually justice in what he said.

There was another Johnson, too, of whom the scornful critics knew nothing. They had not seen the gaunt, hungry youth, weary from a night of tramping the streets, who had stooped down and put one of the few pence he possessed into the hand of a little homeless waif, sleeping on a doorstep in the Strand. They knew nothing of the man who, coming home one night, found a poor woman lying in the street so much exhausted that she could not walk, and took her on his back and carried her to his house. When he found that she was a woman of the lowest class, a miserable outcast, that made no difference to his charity. He had her taken care of until she was well, himself paying all the charges, and then he found for her some honest work that she might have a chance to mend her ways. His life was full of actions like these. The best part of his house was given up to two or three destitute persons, who lived on his bounty, yet made his life a weariness by quarrelling among themselves and grumbling at their bene-



factor. He had no patience with a foolish remark from a well-to-do acquaintance, but he had never-ending patience with these poor, unfortunate creatures who had been soured by the struggle that he himself had found so hard—the struggle to live.

Men saw Johnson—so sturdy, so self-reliant—lording it in the midst of a group of admiring listeners, and heavily snubbing anyone who disagreed with him; and they did not guess how really humble was his spirit and how fervently he besought God's help in prayer. Before he began his first paper for *The Rambler* he wrote in his diary a prayer "that in this undertaking Thy Holy Spirit may not be withheld from me, but that I may promote Thy glory and the salvation of myself and others." On his fifty-fifth birthday he wrote:

I have now spent fifty-five years in resolving; having from the earliest times almost that I can remember been forming schemes for a better life. I have done nothing. The need of doing therefore is pressing, since the time of doing is short. O God, grant me to resolve aright, and to keep my resolutions, for Jesus Christ's sake.

In 1759 Johnson's mother died at Lichfield. She had been ill for a long time, and he had sent her all the money he could spare, and now he had not enough to pay the expenses of her funeral. He could not bear to think that any mark of respect or of honour that might be paid to her should be missing through lack of money. He set resolutely to work, and in the evenings of one week he wrote *Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia*, for which a bookseller paid him a hundred pounds.

It is a melancholy story, as we may imagine it would be if we think of poor Johnson sitting down, harassed and heartsore, to write against time that he might gain the money for his sad need. It tells the story of *Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia*, fourth son of the Emperor, who according to the custom of his race was shut up in the Happy Valley with all the other sons and daughters of the royal family. This valley was surrounded on every side by mountains.

The only passage by which it could be entered was a cavern that passed under a rock, of which it had long been disputed



whether it was the work of nature or of human industry. The outlet of the cavern was concealed by a thick wood, and the mouth which opened into the valley was closed with gates of iron, forged by the artificers of ancient days, so massive that no man without the help of engines could open or shut them.

From the mountains on every side rivulets descended that filled all the valley with verdure and fertility, and formed a lake in the middle, inhabited by fish of every species, and frequented by every fowl whom nature has taught to dip the wing in water. This lake discharged its superfluities by a stream, which entered a dark cleft of the mountain on the northern side, and fell with dreadful noise from precipice to precipice till it was heard no more.

The sides of the mountains were covered with trees, the banks of the brooks were diversified with flowers; every blast shook spices from the rocks, and every month dropped fruits upon the ground. All animals that bite the grass or browse the shrubs, whether wild or tame, wandered in this extensive circuit, secured from beast of prey by the mountains which confined them. On one part were flocks and herds feeding, on another all the beasts of chase frisking in the lawns, the sprightly kid was bounding on the rocks, the subtle monkey frolicking in the trees, and the solemn elephant reposing in the shade. All the diversities of the world were brought together, the blessings of nature were collected, and its evils extracted and excluded.

Once a year the iron gates were opened, the Emperor with his train entered, and for eight days there was great rejoicing, with feasting and music and dancing. Every wish was instantly granted. Each year some strangers arrived with the King, and these were allowed, if they wished, to remain. Most of them did so wish, for the place seemed so happy they could not leave it; and when the iron gates were once closed on them they could never return.

The sons and daughters of the royal house lived in this Happy Valley a life free from all care or hardship. They were taught by sages, who told them how unhappy was the world outside, where man strove with man, and there was want and misery and disease. But Prince Rasselas, by the time he was twenty-six years old, had wearied of the sameness and the ease of this retired life, and had discovered that man, unlike the lower animals, requires something more than food and warmth and comfort to satisfy him. He felt sure he should never reach



this something higher while he remained in the Happy Valley, and so he planned to escape. He examined the valley thoroughly to see if he could find any way out, and this took him ten months, and during this time he was much happier, because he was occupied and had something to strive after; but he could find no way of escape, and his hopes sank. Then a workman, very skilled in making boats, put into the Prince's head the idea of escape by flying. This workman believed that one day men would fly as birds do. "He that can swim need not despair to fly," he told the Prince,

"to swim is to fly in a grosser fluid, and to fly is to swim in a subtle. We are only to proportion our powers of resistance to the different density of matter through which we are to pass. You will be necessarily upborne by the air if you can renew any impulse upon it faster than the air can recede from the pressure."

The workman, at the Prince's wish, set to work to make a pair of wings for Rasselas and a pair for himself.

In a year the wings were finished; and on a morning appointed the maker appeared, furnished for flight, on a little promontory; he waved his pinions awhile to gather air, then leaped from his stand, and in an instant dropped into the lake. His wings, which were of no use in the air, sustained him in the water; and the Prince drew him to land half dead with terror and vexation.

This failure made the Prince more melancholy than ever. The only thing that could at all please him was to hear Imlac, one of the poet-sages who instructed him, tell of his adventures. He had had many sorrows and trials, but with them all he confessed that he would rather be struggling in the world than safe and at rest in the Happy Valley. Then Rasselas told of his own wish to escape. "Teach me the way to break my prison," he said; "thou shalt be the companion of my flight, the guide of my rambles, the partner of my fortune, and my sole director in the choice of life."

So the Prince and the poet together tried to think of a plan of escape; and one day, walking by the side of the mountain, they saw the rabbits, whom the rain had driven from their burrows, taking shelter among the bushes, behind which they



had formed holes, tending upward in an oblique line. "Let us not think ourselves degraded by learning from the coney," said Imlac. "We may escape by piercing the mountain in the same direction."

Next they began their labours, and after much searching they found a small cavern concealed by a thicket from which they could begin to make their tunnel. Day after day they laboured, coming sometimes to hollow spaces that made their work easier. They had reached the middle of the mountain without discovery when one day the Prince, coming down from the place where he had been working, found his sister Nekayah standing by the door of the cave. She had not come as a spy, she said, but through love and a longing to be with her brother. "Permit me to fly with you from this tasteless tranquillity, which will yet grow more loathsome when you have left me. You may deny me to accompany you, but cannot hinder me from following."

So it was agreed that Nekayah should go with them; and when at length the tunnel was finished they came out at the top of the mountain and "beheld the Nile, yet a narrow current, wandering beneath them. . . . The Prince was so much delighted with a wider horizon that he could not soon be persuaded to return into the valley."

On the night of the next full moon Rasselas and Nekayah, with Imlac and one follower of the Princess, left the valley, taking with them jewels enough to make them rich when they came to a place where these could be sold. The rest of the story tells how the four travelled through Egypt, Syria, and Arabia, visiting Courts and cities and talking to the wisest men that could be found in the country. But nowhere could they find the perfect happiness and satisfaction that they sought; each had strong desires which could not be gratified; and in the end they decided to return to Abyssinia.

*Rasselas* added greatly to Johnson's fame, and honours began to pour in on him. He visited Oxford and received the degree of M.A.; and in 1762 George III granted him a



pension of £300. This was wealth to a man who had lived as Johnson had done. He hesitated at first about accepting it; in his *Dictionary* he had defined a pension as "an allowance made to anyone without an equivalent. In England it is generally understood to mean pay given to a State-hireling for treason to his country." But he was assured the pension was given to him, not on account of anything he was expected to do, but for what he had already done; and he felt he might with a clear conscience take what was freely offered.

Then began the happiest period of Johnson's life. There was no spur of necessity to drive him on, and his idleness increased upon him. He finished an edition of Shakespeare in 1767, and after that he wrote his *Lives of the Poets*, for which he received two hundred guineas. But for the most part he lived contentedly on his pension, though he gave so much of it away that he was never really at ease in money matters. He had many friends, and was welcome in many homes. In 1764 the Club was founded, and here Johnson reigned as a dictator. He was able to do there what he always said he loved to do, "fold his legs and have his talk out."

We will come back now to the Club and make the acquaintance of some of the other members.

## II. OLIVER GOLDSMITH

Next in importance to Dr Johnson came Oliver Goldsmith. He usually sat as near as possible to the Great Dictator at the evening meetings, and listened to his words and watched the changing expression of his face with great eagerness, though he sometimes showed signs of restlessness and impatience. He revered his leader and thought him the wisest and the best of men; but there was a little envy mixed with his reverence, for Oliver was vain and was always anxious to attract attention to himself. Very often he made himself quite ridiculous by forcing himself into a conversation on some subject of which he knew nothing, and very often indeed he brought down upon



himself one of the great Doctor's most crushing rebukes, which kept him silent and sulky for the next quarter of an hour. But very soon things were all right again, for Johnson really loved Goldy, as he called him, and Goldsmith was as ready to be appeased as to be offended.

Everybody loved Goldy, though everybody laughed at him. They had always done so, ever since he had been a short, stumpy, ugly, affectionate little boy in the Irish village of Lissoy, where his father was rector. He was active and nimble, and good at every kind of sport, but he had no head for his lessons. Never was there so dull a boy, said the old lady who kept the dame school, and tried to teach Oliver his lessons; and when he went on to the village school the schoolmaster, Paddy Byrne, said much the same. This Paddy Byrne was an old soldier who had fought under Marlborough and had come back to his native village full of tales of battles and sieges and thrilling adventures of all kinds, including some with the "little people," as Irishmen called the fairies of the countryside. He had a store of old Irish ballads, and some classical learning, and the boys listened to him with delight. Later on, in *The Deserted Village*, Oliver Goldsmith drew Paddy Byrne's portrait:

A man severe he was, and stern to view;  
I knew him well, and every truant knew:  
Well had the boding tremblers learned to trace  
The day's disasters in his morning face;  
Full well they laughed with counterfeited glee  
At all his jokes, for many a joke had he;  
Full well the busy whisper circling round,  
Conveyed the dismal tidings when he frowned,  
Yet he was kind, or if severe in aught  
The love he bore to learning was in fault;  
The village all declared how much he knew:  
'Twas certain he could write, and cypher too;  
Lands he could measure, terms and tides presage,  
And e'en the story ran that he could gauge;  
In arguing, too, the parson owned his skill;  
For e'en though vanquished he could argue still;  
While words of learned length and thundering sound  
Amazed the gazing rustics ranged around;  
And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew,  
That one small head could carry all he knew.



Yet though he possessed all these accomplishments Paddy Byrne was not considered by Goldsmith's parents as a teacher fitted to conduct their boy's education for very long, and Oliver was sent when he was nine years old to a higher type of school. His ugly face was uglier than ever now, for he had had smallpox when he was eight years old, and it had left him so disfigured that people who saw him for the first time could scarcely help laughing at his comical expression. He was sensitive about his looks, and very grateful to anyone who seemed to like him in spite of them; but he was too careless and happy-go-lucky by temperament for this misfortune to cause him as much distress as some boys might have felt. His schoolfellows were fond of him, though they made fun of him. Most people liked him, and thought him a good-natured, simple lad, ready to do a kind turn to anyone, and always being imposed upon.

When he was seventeen he left school. He wanted to go to Trinity College, Dublin, as his elder brother Henry had done, but his father's circumstances were very bad at the time, and there was no money to pay his college fees. If he went at all he must go as a sizar, or poor scholar, who had to wear a coarse stuff gown and a red cap, and wait on his fellows in return for his board and lodging. For some time he refused to do this; then his uncle Contarine, who was fond of the lad and believed that he was not as dull as the rest of the family thought him to be, came and talked to him. He persuaded him that a university education was worth a little unpleasantness, and, still rather unwillingly, Goldsmith consented to go.

He entered Trinity College in June 1744, but his career there was not a success. He was idle and insubordinate. He got into many scrapes, and many times suffered public rebuke from the authorities. He was so poor that he had no decent clothes to show himself in at any gatherings of the university students. To provide himself with the barest necessities he wrote ballads and sold them at five shillings each at a shop that he knew of; and he used to steal out of the college at



night and loiter about the city for the pleasure of hearing some street-singer bawl out his ballad to a crowd of ragged boys and girls. His fellow-students laughed at his ugly face and shabby clothes and stumbling speech. They thought him, as everybody did, a simple-natured, good-hearted, dull-witted sort of fellow, though he had a sort of charm about him, so that they could not help liking him. He managed somehow to take his B.A. degree in 1749, and then he went home to his mother's house—his father had died two years before—with no plan of any kind as to what he was going to do next.

For two years he hung about the village, fishing and otter-hunting, and spending his evenings at the tavern. Then he went up to the Bishop of Dublin as a candidate for ordination, but the Bishop quite decidedly refused him. Perhaps he did not consider Oliver's past record satisfactory, or perhaps he thought that a candidate who came up dressed in scarlet riding breeches (as this foolish young man is said to have done) would not make a fit and proper minister of the Established Church of Ireland.

Kind Uncle Contarine was deeply grieved at this failure, and set to work to find some other opening for the luckless youth. He got him a post as tutor in a family at Roscommon, and there Oliver stayed for nearly a year. Then, having saved about thirty pounds, he decided to give up tutoring, bought a horse, and set off for Cork, on his way to America. For six weeks nothing was heard of him; then he, with a wretched, bony horse that he called Fiddle, reappeared at his mother's house. He had a dismal tale to tell of how he had sent all his belongings on board the ship that was to take him to America, and how the vessel had sailed without him, so that he had been obliged to sell his good horse and buy another for the smallest possible sum, and how he had been obliged to beg on the road when all his money was gone; and he was surprised and hurt that his family were not rejoiced to see him, since he was so delighted to be back again in the home he loved.

Then Uncle Contarine gave him fifty pounds to go to



London and begin to study law at the Temple, and he set off joyfully; but in a few weeks he was back again, very contrite and very miserable, having stopped at Dublin on the road and gambled away all his money. The kind uncle forgave him and fitted him out again, and he started for Edinburgh to study medicine. This time he did not come back. For about eighteen months he attended the Edinburgh Medical School, Uncle Contarine supplying him with money from time to time. He made many friends who laughed at him, yet loved him for the queer, delightful charm that he had; and then suddenly he decided that he could study medicine better in Paris. He started for Paris, but after what we have heard of his unaccountable ways we are not surprised to hear that he arrived at Leyden instead. The Dutch university disappointed him, and he wrote home to his uncle, "Physic is by no means taught so well here as in Edinburgh; and in Leyden there are but four British students owing to all necessaries being so extremely dear, and the professors so very lazy, the chemical professor excepted." Soon he was on his travels again. He left Leyden in 1755 and set out on a tour on foot through Flanders into France. He carried his flute in his pocket, and at each village he came to he took it out and played a merry tune, so that the peasants came running out to dance to it; and they quickly made friends with this strange, gay musician who was as simple-hearted as they were themselves. They paid him with a few small coins, enough to buy a supper and a lodging, and he went happily on. He came to Paris, where he attended some chemical lectures and saw the great French writer Voltaire; then he went southward through Switzerland and across the Alps to Italy. Here his music failed him, for every peasant was, he says, a better musician than he was. But he found another means of paying his way which served as well as the music had done. "In all the foreign universities and convents," he wrote later, "there are, upon certain days, questions of philosophy discussed in which any traveller may join; and if the stranger upheld his argument with wit and



learning he could claim a sum of money, a dinner, and a bed for one night." Goldsmith entered lightheartedly into these disputations, and gained the rewards; and so back through France, fluting again till he reached Calais. Then he took ship to Dover, and landed in England in February 1756, with a few halfpence in his pocket.

He tramped to London, taking a fortnight over the journey and singing by the way, and then he set himself to the stern task of making a living. We are not quite sure what he did, for he never liked to talk about these early experiences in the great, strange city. He would sometimes refer to the time "when I lived among the beggars in Axe Lane," but he never could be drawn to tell the full tale. We know that he was an usher in a school, a druggist's assistant, a doctor, in a suit of gold and green, among the poor of Bankside, and that he worked as a reader for the Press at the office of Samuel Richardson in Salisbury Court. Then he went again as usher, this time in a school at Peckham, and here, at dinner one day, he met a Mr Griffiths, a publisher of Paternoster Row. Griffiths thought the queer, unhappy Irishman might be useful to him, and he engaged him to write for his periodical, *The Monthly Review*.

In April 1757 Goldsmith went to live in the bookseller's house, and in return for board and lodging and a small money payment he undertook to write whatever his master required of him. He stayed for five months, and then he left and tried to pick up a living by writing for various booksellers, as Johnson and others had done before him. It was a miserable, squalid life, and Goldsmith made several attempts to escape from it to something better, but failed each time and was obliged to return to his drudgery. Meantime, the booksellers had discovered that his work was far better than that of most of the needy writers they employed, and as several of them were eager for his services he was able to get slightly better pay. He had always had a high opinion of his own talents, and now he felt encouraged to try to write something besides



the hack work he did for his employers. He was longing to go home, and he wrote many letters to his friends in Ireland telling them how homesick he was for the old country; but he would not go back until he was more prosperous.

At length a small piece of good fortune came to him. He wrote *An Enquiry on the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe*, which was founded on the experience he had gained in his travels. It was not very deep or learned, but it was pleasantly written, with something of the charm that Goldsmith was able to put into everything he did, and it brought him a little money and some fame. It brought him also the acquaintance of several men of letters—Thomas Percy, the antiquary, David Garrick, the actor and playwright, Smollett, the novelist, and probably, too, of Dr Johnson, who certainly knew him before 1761.

He was now kept employed writing essays for various periodicals, and his reputation rose quickly. He was able to live in greater comfort. He took lodgings at Islington in the house of a Mrs Fleming, and he was able to indulge his taste for gaudy clothing. He was less noticeably ugly now than he had been in his youthful days; the marks of the smallpox were less plainly to be seen, and his features had improved. But he was still plain and awkward, and his gay, fashionable clothes made him look a little ridiculous. He did not know this, and was quite proud of his appearance, liking to talk about his tailor, Mr Filby of Water Lane, whose bills he was not always able to pay.

Goldsmith had little idea of the value of money, and however much he earned was always in debt, and so it came about that one day in 1764 he found himself in serious difficulties and sent in haste—as many other people when they were in trouble had done before him—to the rough-tongued, harsh-mannered Dr Johnson. “I received one morning a letter from poor Goldsmith that he was in great distress,” the Doctor told James Boswell,

and as it was not in his power to come to me, begging that I would come to him as soon as possible. I sent him a guinea and



promised to come to him directly. I accordingly went as soon as I was dressed, and found that his landlady had arrested him for his rent, at which he was in a violent passion. I perceived that he had already changed my guinea, and had got a bottle of Madeira and a glass before him. I put the cork into the bottle, desired he would be calm, and began to talk to him of the means by which he might be extricated. He then told me that he had a novel ready for the press which he produced to me. I looked into it and saw its merit; told the landlady I should soon return; and having gone to a bookseller, sold it for sixty pounds. I brought Goldsmith the money, and he discharged his rent, not without rating his landlady in a high tone for having used him so ill.

This was the great work *The Vicar of Wakefield*, into which, more than into any other of his writings, Goldsmith put his own simplicity, gaiety, and loveliness. He put into it also his past experiences, and his affectionate memories of his friends at home. Dear Dr Primrose, the Vicar, is a combined portrait of his father and his Uncle Contarine. He is like Parson Adams, but without his touch of the grotesque. In the earlier scenes we love him and smile at him, just as people used to love and smile at Goldsmith; later, we love him better still, and reverence him as a brave and righteous man. If you do not know the Vicar of Wakefield, make his acquaintance quickly. Read Goldsmith's book and you will know how wise and delightful and humoursome he is, and what a joy it is to be in his company. You will learn by what quaint methods he guides his family in the right way; see him slyly upsetting the saucepan in which his daughters were making washes for their complexions; hear him directing that a lump of sugar shall be given to each of his two little sons for offering to give up their bed to a visitor—the one who spoke first to have the larger lump; read the epitaph he wrote for his wife while she was still living. "I extolled her prudence, economy and obedience till death," says the Vicar,

and having got it copied fair, with an elegant frame, it was placed over the chimney-piece, where it answered several very useful purposes: it admonished my wife of her duty to me, and my fidelity to her; it inspired her with a passion for fame, and constantly put her in mind of her end.



Misfortunes come upon the Vicar thick and fast, and he bears them with such steadfastness that the simple country parson becomes a great and noble figure, but with the dignity of utter self-forgetfulness. In the prison to which he is sent for debt, among the crowd of brutal, mocking ruffians, the gentle old man has the courage to stand up and preach the Gospel of his Master. He says:

I read them a portion of the service with a loud, unaffected voice, and found my audience perfectly merry on the occasion. Lewd whispers, groans of contrition burlesqued, winking and coughing, alternately excited laughter. However, I continued with my natural solemnity to read on, sensible that what I did might mend some, but could itself receive no contamination from any.

After the reading came the sermon, and though some laughed others seemed impressed, and the Vicar felt encouraged to go on; and day after day he went down into the common prison and bore calmly insults and jests and rough horse-play, so that by and by even those hardened men began to respect and love him. Yet all this time his own private sorrows were growing heavier and heavier, and it is not until he and his family have reached the lowest depths of misery that fortune turns and happiness comes to them again.

The Vicar's family are almost as delightful in their way as he is himself. His wife, whom he chose "as she did her wedding gown, not for a fine glossy surface, but for such qualities as would wear well," was "a good-natured, notable woman; and as for breeding, there were few country ladies who could show more. She could read any English book without much spelling; but for pickling, preserving and cookery none could excel her." The eldest son, George, Goldsmith sends to flute and dispute through Europe as he himself had done, and he tells the story of his own adventures and his struggles for a living in the story of this lad.

The daughters, Olivia and Sophia, make a charming pair: Olivia, now about eighteen, had that luxuriance of beauty with which painters generally draw Hebe; open, sprightly and commanding. Sophia's features were not so striking at first, but often



did more certain execution; for they were soft, modest and alluring. . . . The one entertained me with her vivacity when I was gay, the other with her sense when I was serious.

Next came Moses—poor Moses, who prided himself on his acuteness, and yet was so woefully deceived in the matter of the green spectacles. A part of this immortal passage which tells of his discomfiture must be quoted. The Vicar, it must be explained, wished to sell a horse, and being unable to go to the fair himself he sent his son. The proud Moses made himself very spruce,

brushing his buckles and cocking his hat with pins. The business of the toilet being over, we had at last the satisfaction of seeing him mounted on the colt with a deal box before him to bring home groceries in. He had on a coat made of that cloth they call thunder-and-lightning, which, though grown too short, was much too good to be thrown away. His waistcoat was of gosling green, and his sisters had tied his hair with a broad blue riband. We all followed him several paces from the door, bawling after him, "Good luck! Good luck!" till we could see him no longer.

It was late before Moses returned and the family were growing anxious; but at length he came

slowly on foot, and sweating under the deal box, which he had strapt round his shoulders like a pedlar. "Welcome, welcome, Moses! Well, my boy, what have you brought us from the fair?"—"I have brought you myself," cried Moses, with a sly look, and resting the box on the dresser.—"Ay, Moses!" cried my wife, "that we know, but where is the horse?"—"I have sold him," cried Moses, "for three pounds five shillings and twopence."—"Well done, my good boy," returned she, "I knew you would touch them off. Between ourselves three pounds five shillings and twopence is no bad day's work. Come, let us have it then."—"I have brought back no money," cried Moses again, "I have laid it all out in a bargain, and here it is," pulling out a bundle from his breast, "here they are; a gross of green spectacles, with silver rims and shagreen cases."—"A gross of green spectacles!" repeated my wife in a faint voice, "and you have parted with the colt and brought us back nothing but a gross of green paltry spectacles!"—"Dear mother," cried the boy, "why won't you listen to reason? I had them a dead bargain, or I should not have bought them. The silver rims alone will sell for double the money."—"A fig for the silver rims," cried my wife in a passion,



“I dare swear they won’t sell for above half the money at the rate of broken silver, five shillings an ounce.”—“You need be under no uneasiness,” cried I, “about selling the rims, for they are not worth sixpence; for I perceive they are only copper varnished over.”—“What!” cried my wife, “not silver! the rims not silver?”—“No!” cried I, “no more silver than your saucepan.”—“And so,” returned she, “we have parted with the colt, and have only got a gross of green spectacles, with copper rims and shagreen cases! A murrain take such trumpery! The block-head has been imposed upon, and should have known his company better.”—“There, my dear,” cried I, “you are wrong; he should not have known them at all!”—“Marry, hang the idiot,” returned she, “to bring me such stuff; if I had them I would throw them in the fire.”—“There again you are wrong, my dear,” cried I, “for though they be copper we will keep them by us, as copper spectacles, you know, are better than nothing!”

Poor Moses had been taken in by a sharper, a reverend-looking man who had made friends with him, and then had advised him to buy the spectacles from another man, who was his confederate; and so ended his reputation as a sharp fellow.

Two little boys completed the Vicar’s family; and through all of them a family likeness prevailed, “and, properly speaking, they had but one character—that of being all equally generous, credulous, simple and inoffensive.” We are delighted to know that when we leave them they are once more happy and prosperous, as they deserve to be, “assembled once more by a cheerful fireside.” Says the Vicar:

My two little ones sat upon each knee; the rest of the company by their partners. I had nothing now on this side of the grave to wish for; all my cares were over; my pleasure was unspeakable. It now only remained, that my gratitude in good fortune should exceed my former submission in adversity.

About the same time that *The Vicar of Wakefield* was published the Club was established, and this brought Goldsmith into closer association with the other literary men of the day. For the next ten years he was famous, and would have been prosperous if his careless, improvident ways had not kept him poor. Like Johnson, he gave away a great deal of money to



the wretched and the destitute; unlike Johnson, he had no idea of managing his own affairs with prudence. He scarcely knew where his money went; he worked hard and continuously, but he was always in difficulties. At the end of 1764 he published his poem *The Traveller*, which had a great success. Johnson said of it, "There has not been so fine a poem since Pope's time."

Essays and poems and compilations of various sorts followed one another in quick succession; and then Goldsmith tried his hand at a new kind of composition. He wrote a play called *The Good-natur'd Man*, and in 1768 it was produced at Covent Garden Theatre. It had only a moderate success, but it set Goldsmith on the road toward a greater one. This came in 1773, when *She Stoops to Conquer* was produced and charmed the town. We shall say more about these two comedies when we consider the drama of the time.

Between the two plays came the beautiful poem of *The Deserted Village*, with its loving recollections of Goldsmith's far-away boyhood. The description of the schoolmaster has already been quoted; here is a part of the description of the parson:

A man he was to all the country dear,  
 And passing rich with forty pounds a year; . . .  
 His house was known to all the vagrant train;  
 He chid their wanderings, but relieved their pain;  
 The long remember'd beggar was his guest,  
 Whose beard descending swept his aged breast;  
 The ruin'd spendthrift, now no longer proud,  
 Claimed kindred there, and had his claims allowed;  
 The broken soldier, kindly bade to stay,  
 Sat by the fire, and talked the night away,  
 Wept o'er his wounds, or tales of sorrow done,  
 Shouldered his crutch, and showed how fields were won.  
 Pleased with his guests, the good man learned to glow,  
 And quite forgot their vices in their woe.  
 Careless their merits or their faults to scan,  
 His pity gave ere charity began.

Thus to relieve the wretched was his pride,  
 And e'en his failings leaned to virtue's side;  
 But in his duty prompt at every call,  
 He watched and wept, he prayed and felt for all;



And as a bird each fond endearment tries  
To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies,  
He tried each art, reprov'd each dull delay,  
Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way.

*The Deserted Village* was as highly praised as *The Traveller*. Yet with all these successes Goldsmith was still harassed about money, and was forced to write with feverish industry to keep himself out of a debtor's prison. The struggle told upon his health. In the spring of 1774 he fell ill of a nervous fever, and on March 25 a doctor was hurriedly sent for. He found Goldsmith very ill—so ill that it was decided to call in two other doctors for consultation. "Your pulse," said one of these doctors, "is in greater disorder than it should be from the state of your fever: is your mind at ease?" "It is *not*," said Goldsmith.

For ten days he lay on his bed in his chambers in Brick Court, suffering much and growing rapidly weaker. Nothing that the doctors could do could help him to recovery, and on April 4 he died. A group of wretched creatures whom he had relieved with his charity waited, we are told, on the stairs leading to his chambers, and burst into wild weeping when they heard that he was dead.

Three months later Johnson wrote to a friend and told him the sad news. "He died of a fever, exasperated, I believe, by the fear of distress. He raised money and squandered it by every artifice of acquisition and folly of expense. But let not his frailties be remembered; he was a very great man."

### III. SOME OTHER MEMBERS OF THE CLUB

The idea of founding a literary club had come from Sir Joshua Reynolds; he consulted with Johnson, and the two together established the Club. Joshua Reynolds was the son of a Devonshire clergyman and had come to London when he was a young man to study painting. He and Johnson were great friends, and Johnson often visited him at the house in Leicester Square where he lived with his sister. The Doctor had a great



admiration for Miss Reynolds, and was never happier than when he was seated at her tea-table drinking cup after cup of the tea she poured out for him; and he once made a little rhyme, after the fashion of the old ballads—which were being a great deal talked of at that time, because Dr Percy had just published a collection of them—and addressed it to her :

Oh, hear it then, my Renny dear,  
Nor hear it with a frown,  
You cannot make the tea so fast  
As I can gulp it down.

Reynolds wrote a few papers for *The Rambler*, and he published later the *Discourses on Art*, which he had given to his students and on various public occasions. He was not a great writer himself, although he associated with great writers and for some years before the Club was established his house was the meeting-place of all the most famous authors of the day.

Edmund Burke, a young Irishman who had been at Trinity College at the same time as Goldsmith, was very often there. He was the son of a small solicitor, and he came to London in 1747 intending to study law. He passed nine obscure years as a law student, though he spent most of his time in reading, writing poetry, and travelling. He had a small income, so he did not suffer as Johnson and Goldsmith suffered while he was making his way, but he was always in want of money, especially after his marriage in 1751. He was interested in political questions, and spoke at debating societies and various meetings. In 1757 he wrote *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, and soon afterward he became private secretary to Lord Rockingham and was elected a Member of Parliament. About the same time he joined the Club. In Parliament his great gifts were soon recognized, and it is by his political speeches and writings that he won his greatest fame. They were full of fire and passion, and yet his sentences were stately and balanced and clear, so that his speeches make real literature. He was a Whig and Johnson was a Tory, but each respected the other, and Johnson



declared that Burke was "the only man whose common conversation corresponds with the general fame which he has in the world. Take up whatever topic you please, he is ready to meet you."

Of Edward Gibbon, another member of the Club, Johnson thought little, and Gibbon, as he himself admitted, feared the Great Dictator more than he loved or admired him. The two men were quite unlike in their habits and their tastes. George Colman, another member of the Club, said of these two:

Their manners and tastes, both in writing and conversation, were as different as their habiliments. On the day I first sat down with Johnson in his rusty-brown suit and his black worsted stockings, Gibbon was placed opposite to me in a suit of flowered velvet with a bag<sup>1</sup> and a sword. . . . Johnson's style was grand, and Gibbon's elegant; the stateliness of the former was sometimes pedantic, and the latter was occasionally finical. Johnson moved to kettledrums and trumpets, Gibbon moved to flutes and hautboys. . . . Mauled as I had been by Johnson, Gibbon poured balm upon my bruises by condescending once or twice in the course of the evening to talk with me. The great historian was light and playful, suiting his manner to the capacity of the boy.

Gibbon since his boyhood had loved the study of history, and had early made up his mind to write a great historical work. He thought of many subjects, but could not decide which to choose, until one day when he was on a visit to Rome.

It was at Rome, on the 15th of October, 1764, in the close of Evening, as I sat musing amidst the ruins of the Capitol, while the bare-footed fryars were singing Vespers in the temple of Jupiter, that the idea of writing the decline and fall of the city first started in my mind.

He did not begin his great work until some years later. His father died in 1770, and he inherited a moderate fortune, and he "bid an everlasting farewell to the country," took a house in Bentinck Street, Cavendish Square, and settled down in London. He wrote in his *Autobiography*:

I had now attained the solid comforts of life, a convenient, well-furnished house, a domestic table, a dozen chosen servants, my own carriage, and all those decent luxuries whose value is the

<sup>1</sup> A fashionable wig.



more sensibly felt the longer they are enjoyed. These advantages were crowned by the first of earthly blessings, independence. I was absolute master of my hours and actions; nor was I deceived in the hope that the establishment of my library in town would allow me to divide the day between study and society.

In these ideal circumstances, so different from those in which the great works of Johnson and Goldsmith were written, the history was begun. In 1774 Gibbon became a Member of the House of Commons, and his duties there took up much of his time. In the same year he was elected a member of the Club.

In 1776 volume one of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* was published. The first impression of a thousand copies was sold in a few days, and a second, third, and fourth edition called for. "My book was on every table, and almost on every *toilette*," said Gibbon joyfully, and he went on with his work with fresh energy. He was growing tired of his life in London, and in 1783 he took a house on Lake Geneva, where he and a Swiss gentleman named Deyverdun lived together. Here the work went on steadily, but it was not until 1787 that the sixth volume was finished. Gibbon had told how he came to begin his great work; now he tells of the moment when it was completed:

It was on the day, or rather the night, of the 27th of June, 1787, between the hours of eleven and twelve, that I wrote the last lines of the last page in a summer-house in my garden. After laying down my pen I took several turns in a *berceau* or covered walk of acacias, which commands a prospect of the country, the lake and the mountains. The air was temperate, the sky was serene, the silver orb of the moon was reflected from the waters, and all Nature was silent. I will not dissemble the first emotions of joy on the recovery of my freedom, and perhaps the establishment of my fame. But my pride was soon humbled, and a sober melancholy was spread over my mind by the idea that I had taken my everlasting leave of an old and agreeable companion, and that whatsoever might be the future fate of my history, the life of the historian must be short and precarious.

The member of the Club who contributed most to the gaiety of its meetings was David Garrick. Boswell tells how



not very long after the institution of our Club Sir Joshua Reynolds was speaking of it to Garrick. "I like it much," said he, "I think I shall be of you." When Sir Joshua mentioned this to Dr Johnson, he was much displeased with the actor's conceit. "*He'll be of us,*" said Johnson, "how does he know we will *permit* him? The first duke in England has no right to hold such language." However, when Garrick was regularly proposed some time afterwards, Johnson, though he had taken a momentary offence at his arrogance, warmly and kindly supported him, and he was accordingly elected, was a most agreeable member, and continued to attend our meetings to the time of his death.

Garrick's claim to be a member of a literary club lay in the number of plays, mostly farces, that he had written, some all by himself, some together with George Colman. He was a wonderful actor, who could keep audiences entranced throughout an entire performance, but Dr Johnson said of him, "I thought him less to be envied on the stage than at the head of a table." At the Club he was probably, next to Johnson, the member whose talk gained most attention. It was always lively and entertaining, and he could mimic anyone he had ever met so exactly as to set the whole table laughing. His imitations of Dr Johnson were especially enjoyed and remembered. When he died in 1779 Johnson said of him, "His death eclipsed the gaiety of nations, and impoverished the public stock of harmless pleasure," and this was added to the inscription on the monument raised to his memory by his wife.

There were, in 1780, thirty-five members of the Club, and that number was fixed as its limit. All of them were men of note in their day, and many of them are still remembered. There was Adam Smith, the author of *The Wealth of Nations*, and Charles James Fox, the great Whig statesman. There was Dr Percy, the antiquary, and Sheridan, the dramatist. We cannot go into the history of all these members, but there is one of whom we must give a more particular account—James Boswell, a young Scottish law student, who came to London in 1763, and who may be called the Club's historian.



#### IV. THE BIOGRAPHER OF DR JOHNSON

If it had not been for this same James Boswell we should have known very little about the doings of the Club and not much about Dr Johnson himself. Boswell was an idle, clever, erratic lad, and his father—a Scottish judge with the title of Lord Auchinleck—was puzzled and irritated by his strange whims, and by his enthusiasms for persons who seemed to the plain, sensible, elderly gentleman worth little notice. One of these persons was Dr Johnson. Young James at the age of twenty paid a visit to London, and heard of course a great deal of talk about the *Dictionary* and *Rasselas* and the famous man who had written them. He tried hard to get an introduction, but he was acquainted only with some of the quite unimportant writers of the day, and these dared not approach the great man. Next year he came again, this time with some poems of his own that he managed to get published, but still he could find no one who would give him the introduction he longed for. He had to wait two more years, and then the great moment came.

On May 16, 1763, he went to the house of Mr Thomas Davies the bookseller, whose acquaintance he had made in the way of business, to drink tea with him and his wife. After tea they were sitting together in the back parlour when Johnson unexpectedly came into the shop. "Mr Davies, having perceived him through the glass door of the room in which we were sitting," says Boswell,

announced his awful approach to me somewhat in the manner of an actor in the part of Horatio when he addresses Hamlet on the appearance of his father's ghost, "Look, my lord, it comes!" . . . Mr Davies mentioned my name, and respectfully introduced me to him. I was much agitated; and remembering his prejudice against the Scotch of which I had heard much, I said to Davies, "Don't tell where I come from." "From Scotland," cried Davies, roguishly; "Mr Johnson," said I, "I do indeed come from Scotland, but I cannot help it."

Johnson at once took the expression "come from Scot-



land" as meaning "have left Scotland," and thought, or pretended to think, that Boswell had said that he could not help leaving Scotland. "That, sir," he replied, "is what a very great many of your countrymen cannot help." "This stroke stunned me a good deal," says Boswell,

and when we sat down I found myself not a little embarrassed and apprehensive of what might come next. He then addressed himself to Davies. "What do you think of Garrick? He has refused me an order for the play for Miss Williams, because he knows that the house will be full and that an order would be worth three shillings." Eager to take any opening to get into conversation with him, I ventured to say, "O, Sir, I cannot think Mr Garrick would grudge such a trifle to you!" "Sir," said he, with a stern look, "I have known David Garrick longer than you have done; and I know no right you have to talk to me on the subject." . . . I now felt myself much mortified and began to think that the hope which I had long indulged of obtaining his acquaintance was blasted. And, in truth, had not my ardour been uncommonly strong, and my resolution uncommonly persevering, so rough a reception might have deterred me for ever from making any further attempts.

As it was, however, Boswell did not give up hope, and sat listening to the conversation between the great man and the bookseller with the deepest attention and humility; and by and by he ventured on one or two observations which were received very civilly. He was obliged to leave early as he had another engagement. "Davies followed me to the door, and when I complained to him a little of the hard blows the great man had given me, he kindly took upon him to console me by saying, 'Don't be uneasy. I can see he likes you very well.'"

A week later Boswell ventured to call upon Johnson at his chambers.

He received me very courteously; but it must be confessed that his apartment and furniture and morning dress were sufficiently uncouth. His brown suit of clothes looked very rusty: he had on a little old shrivelled unpowdered wig, which was too small for his head; his shirt-neck and knees of his breeches were loose; his black worsted stockings ill drawn up; and he had a pair of unbuckled shoes by way of slippers. But all these slovenly particulars were forgotten the moment that he began to talk.



There were some other visitors present, and after a time these took their leave. Boswell would have left with them, but Johnson said, "Nay, don't go." "Sir," said I, "I am afraid that I intrude upon you. It is benevolent to allow me to sit and hear you!" He seemed pleased with this compliment, which I sincerely paid him, and answered, "Sir, I am obliged to any man who visits me."

It was clear that the great man had taken a fancy to his new worshipper, and Boswell did not neglect to push his advantage. When, a few months later, he was obliged by his father's wish to go to Utrecht to study law he was immensely flattered when Johnson said, "There are few people I take to as much as you," and still more flattered when the Doctor insisted on going with him as far as Harwich to see him out of England. He wrote to Johnson while he was away, and when he came back, in 1766, the friendship was renewed. When his father heard of this attachment of his son's he almost despaired of James's future. "There's nae hope for Jamie, mon. Jamie is gaen clean gyte. What do you think, mon? . . . Whose tail do you think he has pinned himself to now, mon? A *dominie*, mon—an auld dominie; he keepit a schule and cau'd it an academy."

Boswell was now practising law in Scotland and could only pay occasional visits to London, but while he was there he spent as much time as he could in Johnson's company. Johnson introduced him to all his friends and they often dined in the house of one or another of these. Boswell listened attentively to all that the friend whom he so much revered said on these occasions, and when he got home he wrote down everything he could remember of what had passed. Nearly always he had to record encounters between Johnson and some other of the guests, and always the victory went to Johnson. "We had good talk," said the Doctor one morning, when Boswell called upon him and they discussed the meeting of the evening before. "Yes, sir," replied Boswell, "you tossed and gored several persons."



He saw a good deal of the members of the Club even before he himself was elected as one of them. In 1769 he gave a dinner to a number of them at his lodgings. That evening the great man seemed to be in a gentler mood than usual.

Garrick played round him with a fond vivacity, taking hold of the breasts of his coat, and, looking up into his face with a lively archness, complimented him on the good health he seemed to enjoy; while the sage, shaking his head, beheld him with a gentle complacency. One of the company not being come at the appointed hour, I proposed as usual upon such occasions to order dinner to be served, adding, "Ought six people to be kept waiting for one?" "Why, yes," answered Johnson, with a delicate humanity, "if the one will suffer more by your sitting down than the six will do by waiting." Goldsmith, to divert the tedious minutes, strutted about bragging of his dress, and I believe was seriously vain of it, for his mind was wonderfully prone to such impressions.

Garrick began to laugh at and tease him, and the easily irritated Goldsmith grew annoyed. "Well, let me tell you," he said, "when my tailor brought home my bloom-coloured coat he said, 'Sir, I have a favour to beg of you. When anybody asks you who made your clothes, be pleased to mention John Filby, at the Harrow, Water Lane.' " This was more than Johnson, however mild his mood, could resist, "Why, Sir," he said, "that was because he knew the strange colour would attract crowds to gaze at it, and thus they might hear of him, and see how well he could make a coat even of so absurd a colour."

Sometimes, however, it happened that Goldsmith, with his stumbling, unready tongue, made a shrewd hit at his quicker-witted opponent. One day he was remarking on the simplicity of language that was needed in writing a good fable, and saying that he thought he himself could write one very well. "For instance," said he, "the fable of the little fishes who saw birds fly over their heads, and, envying them, petitioned Jupiter to be changed into birds. The skill consists in making them talk like little fishes." He looked up and saw Johnson shaking his sides with laughter, and said quickly,



“Why, Dr Johnson, this is not so easy as you seem to think it; for if you were to make little fishes talk they would talk like WHALES!”

On April 30, 1773, Johnson proposed Boswell as a candidate for admission to the Club, and he was elected. “Upon my entrance,” says Boswell, “Johnson placed himself behind a chair, on which he leaned as on a desk or pulpit, and with humorous formality gave me a *Charge*, pointing out the conduct expected from me as a good member of the Club.” He proved himself a very good member. He set himself to keep a record of everything that went on. He wrote down the sayings and doings, the habits and actions of Dr Johnson in the fullest detail. He took immense pains to find out his views and opinions. He wrote everything down while it was fresh in his memory, so that we have now a record of the actual words spoken at those long-ago meetings over which the Great Dictator ruled.

Boswell was soon on good terms with all the other members of the Club. Burke, who had been doubtful whether he ought to be admitted, grew to like him sincerely. Reynolds was his close friend to the end of his life. Boswell was in many things vain and foolish, but he had a shrewd, clear brain, and those who came to know him well respected as well as liked him. *The Life of Dr Johnson*, which he wrote after the great man was dead, is acknowledged by everyone to be the best biography in the English language. Boswell admired and loved Johnson with his whole heart, and he has given such a complete and living picture of his hero as no writer, before or since, has ever given of any man or woman. He has recorded not the great man’s virtues only, but also his peculiarities and his failings. All the extracts given in this chapter have been taken from the great *Life of Johnson*. We will give a few more, to show how full and complete was the picture that Boswell drew.

Of Johnson’s rough tongue and his overbearing manners we have had enough. We will see something now of other sides of his character. He was a very loyal friend; no matter what hard things he might say to a friend’s face, he would defend



him always in his absence. A gentleman once attacked Garrick for being vain, and Johnson at once replied, "No wonder, Sir, that he is vain, a man who is perpetually flattered in every mode that can be conceived. So many bellows have blown the fire, that one wonders he has not by this time become a cinder." He defended Garrick from charges of meanness in money matters and of flattering the great, and he upheld the value of the work that the great actor did in making the world a happier and a merrier place than it would have been without him.

Of Johnson's relations with Goldsmith, Boswell gives a very full account; indeed, his book is almost as valuable for what it tell us of Goldsmith as for what it tells us of Johnson. The two had a warm affection for each other, but Goldsmith's restless vanity and desire to be noticed often brought upon himself heavy punishment. One day when both were present at a dinner given by one of their friends Johnson had been for a long time holding the attention of the entire table. Goldsmith grew impatient, and several times tried to break in, but without success. At length, during a short pause, another guest was beginning to speak. Goldsmith believed that Johnson was about to resume his discourse, and said, "Sir, the gentleman has heard you patiently for an hour; pray allow us now to hear him." Johnson sternly replied, "Sir, I was not interrupting the gentleman. I was only giving him a signal of my attention. Sir, you are impertinent." Goldsmith made no reply, but it was clear that he was much hurt. After dinner they all went to the Club, and there Goldsmith sat moody and silent, thinking over the reproof he had received.

Johnson perceived this, and said aside to some of us, "I'll make Goldsmith forgive me," and then called to him in a loud voice, "Dr Goldsmith, something passed to-day where you and I dined. I ask your pardon." Goldsmith answered placidly, "It must be much from you, Sir, that I take ill." And so at once the difference was over, and they were on as easy terms as ever, and Goldsmith rattled away as usual.

Samuel Johnson had some curious habits that puzzled and



interested his friends. "I won a small bet from Lady Diana Beauclerk," says Boswell,

by asking him as to one of his particularities which her ladyship laid I durst not do. It seems he had been frequently observed at the Club to put into his pockets the Seville oranges, after he had squeezed the juice of them into the drink which he had made for himself. Beauclerk and Garrick talked of it to me, and seemed to think that he had a strange unwillingness to be discovered. We could not divine what he did with them; and this was the bold question to be put. I saw on his table the spoils of the preceding night, some fresh peels nicely scraped, and cut into pieces, "O, Sir," said I, "I now partly see what you do with the squeezed oranges you put into your pocket at the Club."

Johnson replied that he had a great love for them, and Boswell asked what he did with them after he had cut them up. "Let them dry, Sir," replied Johnson; and with all his questions Boswell could find out nothing more.

Boswell shows Johnson in uproarious as well as in serious moods. "I have known him," says the biographer, "exceedingly diverted at what seemed to others a very small sport." One evening someone mentioned that a certain gentleman well known to the company had made his will. This, for some reason that the others could not see, tickled Johnson immensely. He persisted in making jokes about it all the evening, and on the way home he laughed so immoderately that when they got outside the Temple Gate he could scarcely control himself, and "laid hold of one of the posts at the side of the foot pavement, and sent forth peals so loud that in the silence of the night his voice seemed to resound from Temple-bar to Fleet-ditch."

Yet this same man, when his mother's old servant lay dying, went to say good-bye to her, and prayed at her bedside with awe and humility for the departing soul, while

she held up her poor hands as she lay in bed, with much fervour. . . . I kissed her. She told me that to part was the greatest pain that she had ever felt and that she hoped we should meet again in a better place. I expressed, with swelled eyes and great emotion of tenderness, the same hope. We kissed and parted, I humbly hope to meet again and part no more.



During Johnson's last years Boswell saw him only occasionally. The old Lord Auchinleck died in 1782, and his son succeeded to his estates, and lived there with his wife and children. He paid frequent visits to London, and he and Johnson made various pleasure trips together. They had been to the Hebrides in 1773, and Boswell had written an account of the expedition in his *Tour to the Hebrides*. Afterward they visited Lichfield and Oxford and other places. They were at Oxford in June 1784, and when they returned to London it was clear that Dr Johnson's health was failing very rapidly. Boswell saw him from time to time, and he collected also from various friends accounts of his sayings and doings. Johnson liked, as always, to talk with his intimate friends, and his conversation was as full of sense and observation and energy as it had ever been, though he was now seventy-five years old. But his strength of body was less than his strength of mind, and on December 19, 1784, he died.

Boswell wrote in the closing chapter of his great work:

I trust I shall not be accused of affectation when I declare that I find myself unable to express all that I felt upon the loss of such a "guide, philosopher, and friend." I shall, therefore, not say one word of my own; but adopt those of an eminent friend, . . . "He has made a chasm which not only nothing can fill up, but which nothing has a tendency to fill up. Johnson is dead. Let us go to the next best—there is nobody. No man can be said to put you in mind of Johnson."



---

## Chapter XXVII

### THE NEW COMEDY

#### HOW TWO IRISHMEN BROUGHT LAUGHTER BACK TO THE THEATRE

THE snowy January evening in the year 1768 which saw Goldsmith's comedy *The Good-natur'd Man* produced at Covent Garden Theatre was more important in the history of the drama than the author, or the actors, or the audience could possibly have guessed. It brought laughter back to English comedy. For a long time laughter had been severely banished. The playgoer who went to see a comedy had gone prepared to weep freely, or at least to sigh gently all through the performance. It is true that he was sure of a happy ending, but even that usually came with floods of tears. If he wanted to laugh he must go to a farce or a pantomime or a ballad opera, all of which were in fashion. Even if he decided on a Shakespearean comedy he could not be sure that the humour in it would not be cut out; for it was the habit of producers of plays at that time to alter and adapt Shakespeare according to what would be to the taste of their audiences. David Garrick, though he acted Shakespearean parts so magnificently, and though he did so much to revive the love of our great dramatist among the people, never hesitated to cut and maul and alter the plays as it suited him. The public, so he and the other people who produced plays believed, liked a comedy that was moral and sentimental; and morality and sentiment they should have whatever else was lost in giving it to them.

Richard Steele, as we have seen, began it. He made a manful effort to purify the drama from the immorality that had disfigured it in the days of Charles II; but in cutting out the



immorality he cut out the wit also, and with all his great gifts he could not put in anything to take its place. He had not Shakespeare's humour—a humour wholesome and joyous and laughter-making. Steele distrusted laughter; it was, he said, "a distorted passion." His followers distrusted it too, and year by year the comedies became fuller of sentiment and farther from the great Elizabethan plays that had made English audiences shake with laughter in the days before the Commonwealth.

The audiences which now filled the theatres had changed as much as had the plays provided for them. The Methodists, who were the followers of Wesley, did not approve of the theatre, and many Church people did not approve of it either. The strictest among them shuddered at the thought of a play, just as the Puritans had done. Many of the London merchants and tradesmen were Methodists, and these no longer brought their families to the theatre. Moreover, the habits and customs of the citizens had changed. There was an increased love of home life, and of family occupations. The introduction of the novel into English literature had provided all who could read with the means of finding for themselves the stories for which their fathers had had to go to the theatre. So they stayed at home, and read *Pamela* and *Tom Jones* and *The Vicar of Wakefield*, or other novels written by the swarm of writers who tried to follow in the footsteps of the writers of these greater works.

Their places in the theatre were taken by those who were eager for the joys of high society. Once more the theatre became a fashionable resort. Playgoers were as eager to know whether certain persons of distinction would be among the audience as they were to know what play would be acted. They were even more anxious to know the names of the actors and actresses who were to take the leading parts; for this was the age of Garrick and Foote and Mrs Clive and other great players who were far above anyone the stage had seen for many years. Perhaps one of the reasons why few really great plays were produced was that the genius of these actors



could transform the parts and make of the play what it would.

These very select audiences added one more to the qualities required for a successful play. It must be refined as well as moral and sentimental. Any reference to what they considered the vulgar side of life was received by the people in the pit and the boxes with strong disapproval. Only in the galleries, which were crowded with the footmen and lackeys of the superior part of the audience and by the disorderly company that brawled in the streets and taverns of the town, could such references find any favour.

Yet there were a few among the playgoers of that day who saw how the drama was getting poorer and more artificial year by year, and who wished to see it brought back to its earlier and healthier state. These few—as has happened more than once in the history of English literature—led the way to better things. Among them was the group that gathered round the outspoken, sham-hating Dr Johnson. George Colman in 1760 wrote a play called *Polly Honeycombe*, which dared to ridicule the sentimental misses who took all their notions of life from these languishing productions; and he followed this up by several other plays which had in them something of the real comic spirit of earlier times. Garrick, who was at this time the manager of Drury Lane Theatre, produced Colman's plays and acted in them; and in 1766 Garrick and Colman, working together, wrote *The Clandestine Marriage*, which was genuinely humorous. All these plays were well received, chiefly because of the popularity of the actors; but when a new sentimental comedy was produced the audience turned from the humorous ones to greet it with increased affection.

Then a greater writer than Colman or Garrick made his venture. Oliver Goldsmith, having the Restoration plays in mind, set to work to write a play which should have all their wit but none of their immorality. He worked slowly and carefully, and finished *The Good-natur'd Man* in 1767. It was read to the Club, who approved; but Garrick did not like it,



and Colman, the manager of Covent Garden Theatre, was doubtful of its success. At length, on January 29, 1768, it was produced. Poor Goldsmith, almost ill with excitement, was there, and most of the Club supported him.

The hero of the play is a young man handsome, high-spirited, charming, and so generous that he cannot say no to anyone, and cannot see distress without relieving it, even if he has to borrow money to do so. He allows his servants to cheat him, and his friends to impose upon him. By going on in this way he has got deeply in debt, and is in danger of being arrested. His uncle, Sir William Honeywood, has been for a long time distressed by his nephew's imprudent conduct. He has returned secretly from a tour abroad and has been watching, quite unknown to the young man, the foolish acts of good nature that are leading him fast to ruin. In order to teach his nephew a lesson Sir William decides to allow him to be arrested for debt before coming to his relief, and arranges the matter with Jarvis, the young man's faithful servant, who in vain tries to keep his master from his follies. Young Honeywood is in love with an heiress, Miss Richland, who is also in love with him; but his modesty and his good nature are so great that he has been persuaded by a friend, Croaker, to try to help Leontine, Croaker's son, to win her. Leontine, however, is in love with Olivia, whom he has brought home to his father's house, pretending that she is the sister who since her babyhood has been living with an aunt in France, and whom he has been sent to bring back to England. All sorts of amusing misunderstandings follow. Croaker is a dismal fellow who depresses everyone who comes near him, while he pretends to cheer them. Then there is Mr Lofty, who professes to be intimate with all the people of high position in the country, and to be able to obtain favours and gifts from them on behalf of his friends.

In the third act the bailiffs come to arrest Honeywood. He persuades them to give him a few days in which to pay the debt, which they do, on condition that he does not go out of



their sight. To his great discomfiture, however, Miss Richland at this moment calls to see him. She has heard that he is to be arrested, and has instructed her lawyer to see about the payment of the debt, and has called with her maid, on some slight pretext, to find out if the reports she has heard are true. Honeywood persuades the bailiffs to dress up in some of his clothes and pretend to be his friends, and the three go in together to Miss Richland. The bailiffs' vulgar manners, and poor Honeywood's attempts to cover their lapses and keep up the pretence that they are gentlemen, make up a scene that is full of genuine and hearty fun.

But it was fun such as was not to the taste of the select and genteel audience that had gathered to see the play. There were cries of "Low! Low!" and some hisses from the pit, and poor Goldsmith was in despair.

The play went on, and the game of cross purposes grew more and more lively. Lofty manages to make young Honeywood believe that it is he who has paid the debt, and Honeywood in gratitude consents to help Lofty to win the hand of Miss Richland, having learned in the meantime that Leontine loves Olivia. He has tried to borrow money to enable these two to elope to Scotland, but has not been successful. The fun rises higher as the play proceeds, and at length comes the happy ending, with the lovers properly paired off, the uncle reconciled to Honeywood, and the young man firmly resolved to act more prudently in the future.

By this time the audience had been conquered. There was hearty laughter all through the last act, and cheers when the curtain fell. The play—with the bailiff scene cut out—ran for nine nights, which in those days meant quite a moderate success, and it brought Goldsmith in four hundred pounds.

Encouraged by this he set to work again, and produced his masterpiece, *She Stoops to Conquer*. He founded this on an adventure of his own before he left Ireland. He was returning to school after a holiday, riding a borrowed horse and with a guinea in his pocket, and he asked a passer-by to direct



him to an inn where he could put up for the night. The man, feeling as people always did that Oliver was the sort of person on whom to play a practical joke, directed him to the house of the squire of the place, Mr Featherston. Goldsmith rode up to the door, called for someone to take his horse, swaggered in, ordered his supper, and behaved in the lordly style of a traveller with plenty of money who honours the inn by his presence. The squire saw the lad's mistake, and decided to carry on the joke, and it was not until Goldsmith asked for his bill next morning that he found out what he had done.

On this incident Goldsmith built up a play that was so much better than *The Good-natur'd Man* that the audience which had only partly approved of the one was quite carried away by the other. I will not attempt here to tell you the story, and so spoil the freshness of enjoyment with which you will one day (if you have not done so already) make the acquaintance of the Hardcastle family, and young Marlow and his friend Hastings, and Mrs Hardcastle's cherished, lubberly son—the unequalled Tony Lumpkin.

*She Stoops to Conquer, or The Mistakes of a Night*, was produced on March 8, 1773, and with it the victory over sentimental comedy was achieved. No one could resist stupid, oafish Tony. There were roars of laughter from the most genteel parts of the house, and very soon all the town was talking about the new play. It ran with few interruptions to the end of the season, and once it was acted by royal command. A new stage in the history of English comedy was begun.

Poor Goldsmith was to write no more plays; but another Irishman—as witty as he, and perhaps even more brilliant, though without Goldy's tender, gracious charm—was ready to carry on the work. Richard Brinsley Sheridan was born in Dublin and educated at Harrow. In 1770, when he was a handsome lad of nineteen years, the family removed to Bath, and there he met and fell in love with the beautiful Miss Linley, daughter of a popular musician of the town. Miss Linley, besides being famed for her lovely face, possessed a



wonderful voice, and her father hoped to make of her a great public singer. He refused absolutely to consent to her marriage with the almost penniless young Irishman. So the two made a run-away match and came to London to try to make a living. For a time Mrs Sheridan earned money by singing in public; but she had always shrunk from such a life, and her husband was very anxious to save her from it. He worked hard at literary task work, and tried his hand at a play. In January 1775 his first comedy was produced at Covent Garden Theatre, but was only coolly received. It was too long, and some of the audience objected to one of the characters—Sir Lucius O'Trigger. Sheridan revised and shortened the play, and softened the offending parts; and then *The Rivals* began a triumphant career which is not finished yet.

*The Rivals* is another play which you can read and enjoy for yourselves, and which will introduce you to a set of delightful people whom you will never forget when once you have made their acquaintance. There is charming Lydia Languish, who is a refined Polly Honeycombe. She reads sentimental novels, and is determined never to be married in the ordinary way, but to elope in a becoming disguise, by means of a rope ladder, and to travel to Scotland in a post-chaise drawn by four horses, while angry guardians follow hot upon her track. She adores Captain Absolute with passion while she thinks he is a penniless ensign. But when she finds that he is really the suitor whom her guardian, Mrs Malaprop, has selected for her husband, and that his father, Sir Anthony Absolute, is also eager for the match, she rejects him in angry disappointment. Mrs Malaprop and Sir Anthony are both quite delightful in their way. The following short extract from one of the scenes will show you something of the laughter-making qualities of *The Rivals*.

Mrs Malaprop has brought Sir Anthony to Lydia's sitting-room, where they find her reading a novel. Sir Anthony wishes to recommend his son to her, but she declares she will love none but Beverley (the son's assumed name), and Mrs



Malaprop, losing temper with her, bids her go from the room. Lydia obeys.

*Mrs Malaprop.* There's a little intricate hussy for you!

*Sir Anthony.* It is not to be wondered at, ma'am,—all this is the natural consequence of teaching girls to read. Had I a thousand daughters, by Heaven! I'd as soon have them taught the black art as their alphabet.

*Mrs M.* Nay, nay, Sir Anthony, you are an absolute misanthropy.

*Sir A.* In my way hither, Mrs Malaprop, I observed your niece's maid coming forth from a circulating library!—She had a book in each hand—they were half-bound volumes with marble covers!—From that moment I guessed how full of duty I should see her mistress.

*Mrs M.* Those are vile places, indeed!

*Sir A.* Madam, a circulating library in a town is as an evergreen tree of diabolical knowledge! It blossoms through the year—and depend upon it, Mrs Malaprop, that they who are so fond of handling the leaves will long for the fruit at last.

*Mrs M.* Fy, fy, Sir Anthony, you surely speak laconically.

*Sir A.* Why, Mrs Malaprop, in moderation now, what would you have a woman know?

*Mrs M.* Observe me, Sir Anthony. I would by no means wish a daughter of mine to be a progeny of learning. I don't think so much learning becomes a young woman; for instance, I would never let her meddle with Greek, or Hebrew, or algebra, or simony, or fluxions, or paradoxes, or such inflammatory branches of learning—neither would it be necessary for her to handle any of your mathematical, astronomical, diabolical instruments.—But, Sir Anthony, I would send her at nine years old to a boarding-school, in order to learn a little ingenuity and artifice. Then, sir, she should have a supercilious knowledge in accounts; and as she grew up I would have her instructed in geometry, that she might know something of the contagious countries!—but above all, Sir Anthony, she should be mistress of orthodoxy, that she might not mis-spell and mis-pronounce words so shamefully as girls usually do; and likewise that she might reprehend the true meaning of what she is saying. This, Sir Anthony, is what I would have a woman know; and I don't think there is a superstitious article in it.

*Sir A.* Well, well, Mrs Malaprop, I will dispute the point no further with you; though I must confess that you are a truly moderate and polite arguer, for almost every third word you say is on my side of the question. But, Mrs Malaprop, to the more important point in debate—you say you have no objection to my proposal?



*Mrs M.* None, I assure you. I am under no positive engagement with Mr Acres; and as Lydia is so obstinate against him, perhaps your son may have better success.

*Sir A.* Well, madam, I will write for the boy directly. He knows not a syllable of this yet, though I have for some time had the proposal in my head. He is at present with his regiment.

*Mrs M.* We have never seen your son, Sir Anthony; but I hope no objection on his side.

*Sir A.* Objection!—let him object if he dare!—No, no, Mrs Malaprop, Jack knows that the least demur puts me in a frenzy directly. My process was always very simple—in their younger days 'twas, "Jack, do this"; if he demurred, I knocked him down—and if he grumbled at that I always sent him out of the room.

*Mrs M.* Ah, and the properest way, o' my conscience!—nothing is so conciliating to young people as severity! Well, Sir Anthony, I shall give Mr Acres his discharge, and prepare Lydia to receive your son's invocations; and I hope you will represent her to the captain as an object not altogether illegible.

*Sir A.* Madam, I will handle the subject prudently.—Well, I must leave you; and let me beg you, Mrs Malaprop, to enforce this matter roundly to the girl. Take my advice—keep a tight hand; if she rejects this proposal clap her under lock and key; and if you were just to let the servants forget to bring her dinner for three or four days, you can't conceive how she'd come about.

Sheridan wrote several more plays, of which *The School for Scandal* and *The Critic* are the most important. They were all brilliantly successful, and Sheridan grew rich and became manager of Drury Lane Theatre after Garrick. Like Goldsmith, he was reckless and improvident and always in debt and in want of money, but in spite of this he and his beautiful wife lived very happily. They were famous and admired in London society, and they knew all the most interesting people of the day. In 1780 Sheridan left playwriting for politics, and entered Parliament; and he was as successful there as he had been in the theatre. Troubles came to him toward the end of his life. His theatre was burned down, he lost his seat in Parliament, his money difficulties increased so that he was in actual want. He fell ill, and all these worries helped to give him little chance of recovery. He died on July 7, 1816.

Goldsmith and Sheridan together did a great work for



English drama. They were the first, since the days of the Elizabethans, to write plays that could be wholeheartedly enjoyed through many generations. They are not great dramatists as Shakespeare and Marlowe and Ben Jonson are great, but their place in English literature is an important one. It was no small thing to banish unwholesome and artificial sentiment, and to bring back real, healthy mirth to the theatre.



---

## Chapter XXVIII

### THE BLUESTOCKINGS

#### I. WOMEN AND BOOKS

**Y**OU will have noticed that up to this time women have had a very small place either as writers or as readers in the history of English literature. A few women had, before the period at which we have now arrived, written books on various subjects, but none of these are of much importance. As for readers, Steele and Addison could count a large number of ladies among the subscribers to *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*; and when Richardson introduced the novel and was followed by Fielding and Smollett and Sterne and a host of others, so that the booksellers' shops were piled high with their productions, ladies were their best customers. But nobody expected women to read serious works. It was, indeed, considered unfeminine and almost improper for a woman to take an interest in the works written for educated men. Mrs Malaprop and Sir Anthony Absolute do really express, though with some exaggeration, the ideas held by many people of that time on the subject of a girl's reading. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who was a girl in the early part of the eighteenth century, loved books and study, and saw no reason why she might not learn everything that a well-educated boy of the time was expected to know; but she hid her studies very carefully from her friends, and would have been almost as much ashamed to have been discovered with her Latin and Greek books before her as to have been caught helping herself from her neighbour's purse.

Toward the middle of the century other girls with brains as strong and a desire for knowledge as great as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's began to rebel against this state of things.



They did not think of claiming, as girls of later ages have successfully done, a school and university education equal to that given to a man. They only wanted to be acknowledged as reasonable beings, who could talk to their fathers and brothers and husbands on equal terms, and be able to take an interest in the subjects that were of interest to intelligent men.

These girls insisted on learning just as much as their abilities and their opportunities would allow them; and they bore bravely the scorn and ridicule that was very freely poured upon them. They had some sympathizers, and among these were a few men, larger-minded than most of their fellows, who gave these daring seekers after knowledge all the encouragement they could. By and by there was a little company of well-educated women, some of whom had become fine scholars, equal to any man of their day.

“About this time” (1781), wrote Boswell,

it was much the fashion for several ladies to have evening assemblies, where the fair sex might participate in conversation with literary and ingenious men, animated by a desire to please. These societies were denominated Blue-stocking Clubs, the origin of which title being little known, it may be worth while to relate it. One of the most eminent members of those societies when they first commenced was Mr Stillingfleet, whose dress was remarkably grave, and in particular it was observed that he wore blue stockings. Such was the excellence of his conversation, that his absence was felt as so great a loss that it used to be said, “we can do nothing without the blue stockings,” and thus by degrees the title was established.

Other explanations of the origin of the term have been given. One that seems quite likely to be true is that “blue stockings” was the name used for a particular kind of coarse worsted stockings, and that the learned ladies took it because they wished to show that at their assemblies dress was less important than conversation, and therefore a proper evening toilette, which included silk stockings, was not necessary.

The most famous of these gatherings was held at the house of the learned and witty Mrs Montagu, wife of a very rich coal-owner. Johnson, who was sometimes persuaded to come to her assemblies, called her rather scornfully “the Queen of the



Blues ”; and when she published, in 1768, her *Essay on Shakespeare*, and Sir Joshua Reynolds said, “ I think the essay does her honour,” the great man roughly replied, “ Yes, sir; it does *her* honour, but it would do nobody else honour.” But his real opinion of Mrs Montagu he expressed in one of his happier moments: “ Sir, that lady exerts more mind in conversation than any person I ever met with. Sir, she displays such powers of ratiocination, such radiations of intellectual excellence, as are amazing.”

Next to Mrs Montagu as a hostess came Mrs Vesey, whose husband was a member of the Club. Her house was not as splendid as the great Mrs Montagu’s, but the meetings held at it were even more popular, for the hostess was charming as well as learned. “ I often dream (with my eyes open) of this blue room,” wrote Mrs Delany to Mrs Vesey.

I see Mr Garrick in one corner of it, Lord Lyttelton sitting close to the fire, Mr Burke in the midst of your circle, Mrs Carter on your sofa; the door opens, in trips a maccaroni, or stalks a Minister of State, or perhaps glides a fine lady; no matter who or what, the Spirit of Vesey is mighty still, my dear Sylph makes her company form a round O, and she sits in the centre, and like the Sun enlivens and illuminates the whole.

Mrs Vesey wrote nothing herself, but all the Bluestockings valued her opinion on books and learned matters more than they valued that of anyone else. “ Vesey of verse the judge and friend,” wrote Hannah More in her poem *Bas Bleu*, which was all about these learned people. Miss Hannah More came from Bristol, where she and her four sisters kept a school for young ladies. Hannah was the youngest of the family and the most brilliant, and after a time she did very little school-keeping, and paid long visits to London, where some of her friends introduced her to Sir Joshua Reynolds and David Garrick, and through them she became one of the company of the Bluestockings. She wrote poems and essays and plays which were all very popular in her day, though they are no longer remembered. Her romantic drama, *Percy*, was produced at Covent Garden Theatre while Sheridan’s *School for*



*Scandal* was being acted at Drury Lane, and it was difficult to say which play drew the largest crowds.

There were many other notable men and women among the Bluestockings, and many who wrote books or essays or learned treatises, though none of them produced any very great or lasting piece of literature. Their work was rather to create a body of intelligent readers who would encourage and support the writers who had higher gifts than they had themselves.

Two writers who have won a place in the history of English literature were, if not actual members of the Bluestocking society, very closely associated with them and strongly influenced by them. We will look next at the work that was done by these two—Frances Burney and Horace Walpole.

### II. HORACE WALPOLE

Horace Walpole was the son of Robert Walpole, the great Whig Prime Minister, but he did not in any way resemble his father. Robert was a jovial, hard-drinking country squire, who despised books and found his chief enjoyment in field sports. Horace was a refined, fastidious gentleman of the town, with the tastes of a scholar and a passion for books and pictures and objects of art. The son adored his father, and thought him the greatest of men; and the all-powerful statesman admired his clever son, and declared that he himself was the younger of the two, in spite of the forty years' difference in their ages.

Horace Walpole entered Parliament in 1741, and remained a Member for twenty-seven years; but he had none of his father's political ability, and no taste for public life. His happy hours were those which he spent among his books and pictures; or writing many letters to his various correspondents; or discussing literary matters in the drawing-rooms of the Bluestockings. He was happiest of all, perhaps, when he was superintending the building and the decoration of "the little Gothic Castle" that he made for himself at Strawberry Hill. He bought the land in 1748, but the "Castle" was not



completed until twenty years later. Many of the letters which have made him famous were written to tell his friends how this "Castle" was getting on, and what new treasures he had bought for it, or how he was occupying himself within it.

"It is a little plaything house that I got out of Mrs Chevenix's [a London toywoman's] shop," he wrote in June 1747, "and is the prettiest bauble you ever saw. It is set in enamelled meadows, with filigree hedges." "My Gothic staircase," he remarked, "is so small that I am inclined to wrap it up and send it to you." Five years later he wrote, "I have carpenters to direct, plasterers to hurry, paper-men to scold, and glaziers to help: this last is my greatest pleasure; I have amassed such quantities of painted glass that every window in my Castle will be illuminated with it." There were two-and-thirty windows in all, glowing with crimson and green and purple; there was a great tower, which was whitened and had "a charming effect"; there was "a gallery with a round chamber at the end," a Beauty Room hung with pictures by Sir Peter Lely, and pinnacles and arches and painted ceilings and Gothic beauties of every kind.

In 1757 Walpole set up a printing press in his "Castle," and wrote to one of his friends, "I send you two copies of a very honourable opening of my press—two amazing Odes of Mr Gray." The poet Gray was a close friend of Horace Walpole's. His *Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat* was written concerning one of the Strawberry Hill pets:

'Twas on a lofty vase's side,  
Where China's gayest art had dy'd  
The azure flowers that blow;  
Demurest of the tabby kind,  
The pensive Selima, reclin'd,  
Gazed on the lake below.

Her conscious tail her joy declar'd;  
The fair round face, the snowy beard,  
The velvet of her paws,  
Her coat, that with the tortoise vies,  
Her ears of jet and emerald eyes,  
She saw, and purr'd applause.



## THE BLUESTOCKINGS

---

She stretched out her paws toward two goldfish swimming in the bowl, overbalanced, and fell in:

Eight times emerging from the flood  
She mew'd to ev'ry wat'ry god,  
Some speedy aid to send.  
No Dolphin came, no Nereid stirr'd;  
Nor cruel Tom, nor Susan heard,  
A fav'rite has no friend.

So the poor cat was drowned, and a great poet wrote an ode to her memory. After Gray's death Walpole set the "lofty vase" upon a pedestal, with a few lines of the ode as an inscription.

Strawberry Hill soon grew famous, and people came from far and near to visit it. "Since my Gallery was finished," wrote Horace Walpole, "I have not been in it a quarter of an hour together; my whole time is passed in giving tickets for seeing it, and hiding myself while it is seen."

This is how Walpole tells of a flood that did a good deal of damage at Strawberry Hill:

*June 11th, 1755*

I was prevented from finishing my letter yesterday, by what do you think? By no less magnificent a circumstance than a deluge. We have had an extraordinary drought, no grass, no leaves, no flowers; not a white rose for the festival of yesterday! About four arrived such a flood, that we could not see out of the windows; the whole lawn was a lake, though situated on so high an Ararat; presently it broke through the leads, drowned the pretty blue bedchamber, passed through ceilings and floor into the little parlour, terrified Harry and opened all Catherine's water-gates and speech-gates. I had but just time to collect two dogs, a couple of sheep, a pair of bantams, and a brace of gold fish; for in the haste of my zeal to imitate my ancestor Noah I forgot that fish would not easily be drowned. In short if you chance to spy a little ark with pinnacles sailing towards Jersey, open the skylight and you will find some of your acquaintance. You never saw such desolation!

Witness our hands,

HORACE NOAH  
CATHERINE NOAH, her X mark  
HENRY SHEM  
LOUIS JAPHET  
PETER HAM, etc.



Here is an anecdote about one of his dogs:

March 23rd, 1770

You know I have always some favourite, some successor of Patapan [a dog who had died]. The present is a tanned black spaniel called Rosette. She saved my life last Saturday night, so I am sure you will love her too. I was undressing for bed. She barked, and was so restless that there was no quieting her. I fancied there was somebody under the bed, but there was not. As she looked at the chimney, which roared much, I thought it was the wind, yet wondered, as she had heard it so often. At last, not being able to quiet her, I looked to see what she barked at, and perceived sparks of fire falling from the chimney, and on searching farther perceived it in flames. It had not gone far, and we easily extinguished it. I wish I had as much power over the nation's chimney. Adieu.

Horace Walpole wrote an enormous number of letters. Over three thousand written to various people have been published, and many remain still unprinted. He wrote also essays and poems, historical memoirs, and elegant descriptions of some of the treasures he had collected in his house at Strawberry Hill. Next to his letters, his best-known work is a romantic story, *The Castle of Otranto*. He tells in one of his letters how this came to be written:

I waked one morning in the beginning of last June, from a dream of which all I could recover was, that I had thought myself in an ancient castle (a very natural dream for a head filled like mine with Gothic story) and that on the uppermost bannister of a great staircase I saw a gigantic hand in armour. In the evening I sat down, and began to write, without knowing in the least what I intended to say or relate. The work grew on my hands and I grew fond of it—add, that I was very glad to think of anything, rather than politics. In short I was so engrossed with my tale, which I completed in less than two months, that one evening I wrote from the time I had drunk my tea, about six o'clock, till half an hour after one in the morning, when my hand and fingers were so weary, that I could not hold the pen to finish the sentence, but left Matilda and Isabella talking in the middle of a paragraph.

Walpole disliked the novels of Richardson and of the writers who followed him. They were crammed full, he declared, of sentiment and dull domestic details. He wanted to bring back



romance, with its strangeness and mystery and stirring adventure, and he wrote *The Castle of Otranto* hoping to set a new fashion. It is not a very good story, but it had a great influence on the development of the novel, as we shall see later. I will give here one short extract, which I want you to remember when by and by we consider a new kind of novel, carrying on the style of this romance of Horace Walpole's, which became very popular indeed.

Manfred, Prince of Otranto, had betrothed his young son, only fifteen years old, to a noble maiden, Isabella. It was said that the reason for this hasty marriage was the Prince's dread of seeing fulfilled a strange ancient prophecy which said that the castle and lordship of Otranto "should pass from the present family whenever the real owner should be grown too large to inhabit it." The marriage festivities had begun and all the guests were assembled, when Conrad, the bridegroom, was found to be missing. The servant who was sent to fetch him came running back

breathless, in a frantic manner, his eyes staring, and foaming at the mouth. He said nothing, but pointed to the court. The company were struck with terror and amazement. . . . Manfred asked imperiously what was the matter. The fellow made no answer, but continued pointing towards the courtyard; and at last, after repeated questions put to him, cried out, "Oh! the helmet, the helmet!"

In the meantime some of the company had run into the court from whence was heard a confused noise of shrieks, horror and surprise. Manfred, who began to be alarmed at not seeing his son, went himself to get information of what occasioned this strange confusion. . . .

The first thing that struck Manfred's eyes was a group of his servants endeavouring to raise something that appeared to him a mountain of sable plumes. He gazed without believing his sight.

"What are ye doing?" cried Manfred, wrathfully; "where is my son?"

A volley of voices replied, "Oh! my lord! the Prince! the Prince! the helmet! the helmet!"

Shocked with these lamentable sounds, and dreading he knew not what, he advanced hastily,—but, what a sight for a father's eyes!—he beheld his child dashed to pieces, and almost buried



under an enormous helmet, an hundred times more large than any casque ever made for human being, and shaded with a proportionable quantity of black feathers.

Thus Walpole, at the very beginning of his story, introduces an atmosphere of dread and mystery. The story is not such a very terrible one, and the mystery is not much of a mystery; but the idea suggested was taken up by other writers, who used it more skilfully.

Horace Walpole lived to be eighty years old. During the last years of his life he was almost helpless with gout, but he was cheerful and lively even in the midst of his pain. He died on March 2, 1797.

### III. FRANCES BURNEY

In the year 1768—the year that Goldsmith's *Good-natur'd Man* was produced at Drury Lane, and the year in which the Bluestockings triumphed with Mrs Montagu's *Essay on Shakespeare*—a certain Mr Charles Burney, Doctor of Music, was living with his family in a small house in Poland Street, London. The family consisted of his lately married second wife, his two sons, James and Charles, and his four daughters, Hetty, Fanny, Susan, and Charlotte. Fanny was at this time a small, brown-faced, grey-eyed girl of sixteen, so shy and demure that her brothers and sisters teasingly called her “the old lady.” But with all her quiet manner she had a fine sense of humour and a lively imagination. Though she was considered the dunce of the family and had not learned to read until she was eight years old, she was always able to delight the others with a story “out of her own head”; and she was quite happy if she could have a pen and a piece of paper and be left in peace to write down the thoughts and recollections that came into her mind.

She had in a manner educated herself. Her mother had died when she was nine years old, and though her two sisters had been sent to a school in France, Fanny, for various reasons, had been kept at home. Her father was the most popular music



master of fashionable London, and was busy from morning till night. He loved his children dearly, and they adored him, but he could give them little time or attention. So Fanny spent her days very happily, reading in his library, writing long letters to an old friend of the family called "Daddy" Crisp, and scribbling the stories that she delighted to make up. She had not the strong thirst for knowledge that moved the Bluestockings to close, severe study; but she had the same quick intelligence, and the same desire for wider interests than those which belonged to the ordinary life of a young lady, that they had.

Fanny's days were spent quietly, but her evenings were often gay enough. Dr Burney knew nearly all the notable people of London, and was a favourite wherever he went. His little drawing-room was often crowded with writers, statesmen, musicians, and actors, and there was much brilliant talk, and a great deal of delightful music. Shy Fanny would steal away as soon as she could to a quiet corner of the room, and from there watch the gay assembly. Her eyes, short-sighted as they were, missed little that went on, and her quick ears managed to catch just those scraps of conversation that best showed the characters and oddities of the visitors; and all that she saw and heard went into her stories, and these were told with such fresh and lively enjoyment that the men and women she described lived again as she wrote.

But when the second Mrs Burney came to Poland Street there was a change. The new stepmother was a stately, handsome lady, who was anxious to do her very best for the six children. She saw that the girls had been neglected, and she set herself to train them in all useful household arts. It was not long before she found out that Fanny spent a great part of her time in "scribbling"; and so one day, when the girls were busy with their sewing, she spoke to them very seriously on the subject of authorship as a calling for women. She held the views shared by most people of her time that home was the only place for a woman's activities, and although she herself



loved reading and discussions on literary subjects she thought that writing for the public was unfeminine, almost immodest. Moreover, she pointed out that such women as had tried to follow in the footsteps of Richardson and Fielding had produced books that were, for the most part, worthless and in many cases immoral, so that the whole class of lady novelists had received an ill name. Mrs Burney spoke wisely and kindly, and Fanny was greatly impressed. It was clear that story-writing must be given up. So with much anguish of heart she collected all her precious manuscripts, made a bonfire of them in the courtyard at the back of the house, and resolved to write no more.

She kept her resolution, but as she sat at the stitching which now occupied most of her morning hours Fanny could not help thinking of the stories she had so sorrowfully burned. There was one in particular that she had dearly loved. It was about Caroline Evelyn, a beautiful and charming young lady, the daughter of a high-born gentleman who had married a barmaid. Caroline had been brought up by her father's old tutor, the Reverend Mr Villars, and was as refined as she was lovely. After a time her mother had claimed her, and had taken her to live in France. She had been very unhappy there, for her mother and her mother's friends were coarse and vulgar, and to escape from a life she hated she had listened too readily to the love-making of a wicked baronet, who had married and then deserted her. Caroline, with her infant daughter, had taken refuge with her father's old tutor, and at his house the broken-hearted mother had died.

While Fanny stitched industriously at her father's shirts she could not help thinking of the little motherless girl whom Caroline Evelyn had left behind, and picturing what became of her as she grew up, and came to know of her high-born father and her vulgar, Frenchified grandmother. But she only thought all this, she did not attempt to write it down, for she was an obedient, sensible girl, and she knew that her stepmother had advised her for the best. But she could not give up



her scribbling altogether. She wrote longer and longer letters to Daddy Crisp, and she began to keep a diary. In it she wrote about the sayings and doings of the family, the visitors who came to the house, the books she read, and the plays she saw. This is how she describes a conversation with Mr Baretti, a celebrated Italian writer who came to see her father:

Mr Baretti appears to be very facetious; he amused himself very much with Charlotte, whom he calls *Churlotte*, and kisses whether she will or no, always calmly saying, "Kiss à me, *Churlotte*." He asked if she had read *Robinson Crusoe*? Charlotte coloured and answered, "Yes, sir." "And pray how many years vas he on de uninhabited island?" "Oh, sir, I can't tell that." "Vat! don't you remember vat you read? den, my pretty *Churlotte*, you might spare your eyesight. But can you remember vat vas de name of Robinson Crusoe's island?" "Oh, sir, no, that I can't, indeed!" "And could you read all dat book, and not find out dat it has no name at all?" He enquired of me very particularly how my sister Hetty did, whom he had seen as a child.

For a time Fanny managed to satisfy herself with her diary and her letters, but as the years passed on the longing to write a story became too strong to be resisted. At length, when she was turned twenty-two, she decided that she was old enough to judge for herself. The hapless Caroline Evelyn had never been forgotten, and the story of her daughter was in Fanny's head, all ready to be written down.

Early in 1774 the Burneys moved into a larger house, at No. 1 St Martin's Street, where Sir Isaac Newton had once lived, and at the top of which was a little wooden turret room, with many windows and a tiny fireplace, said to have been his observatory. It was an ideal place to write in, and Fanny took possession of it at once. As soon as she had finished her morning task of sewing she ran upstairs to this quiet retreat; sometimes she managed to get several hours during the day which she could spend writing there, happy and undisturbed. It was there that she wrote her story, which she called *Evelina, or The History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World*.

She took a long time in writing it, for her father was preparing his book *The History of Music* for the press, and she



had to spend many hours copying out his manuscript. On some days she could not manage to steal away to the turret room even for an hour. But slowly and with many interruptions the story grew, and by the time Dr Burney's *History of Music* was published in 1776 the first two volumes were almost finished.

The heroine, Evelina, is as virtuous, as beautiful, and as accomplished as her unfortunate mother had been. She is carefully trained and taught by Mr Villars, who loves her tenderly, and she spends her time in the society of his friends, all of whom are gently born and bred. One of these, Lady Howard, persuades Mr Villars to allow Evelina to pay her a visit, and then persuades him to allow his charge to accompany Mrs Mirvan, Lady Howard's daughter, to London. Mr Villars lets her go very unwillingly, foreboding trouble, and trouble quickly comes. In London Evelina meets her grandmother, who has married again and has become Madame Duval. She insists on Evelina spending part of her time in her company, and takes her granddaughter to see various relations of her own, who are as vulgar as she is herself. All sorts of complications arise, and poor Evelina has a trying and an unhappy time. In the end she meets her father, the wicked baronet, and he is so overcome by her grace and beauty, and by her likeness to her dead mother, that he receives her with tears of repentance; and Evelina is happily married to a rich, handsome young nobleman, Lord Orville, who has been faithful to her through many trials and misunderstandings.

After much trembling and hesitation Fanny at length decided to try to get her book published. Her sisters had been for some time in the secret, so she talked the matter over with them, and it was decided to send the two volumes that were finished to the publisher Dodsley, without giving the name of the author. He replied that he could have nothing to do with any work of which he did not know the writer. The disappointed girls decided to try another and a less well-known publisher, and for this they took their brother Charles, then



nineteen years old, into their confidence. So one evening they disguised him as best they could with coats and wrappings, and sent him with the precious parcel of manuscript to Mr Lowndes of Fleet Street. There was a note in the parcel asking that a reply might be sent to "Mr Grafton, The Orange Coffee-house, Haymarket," and from there, a little later, Charles fetched the answer. Mr Lowndes thought very favourably of the story, but could promise nothing until he had seen the third and last volume.

Fanny was again very busy helping her father, and though she worked very hard she could not manage to finish the book until April 1777. She felt that she dared not publish it without her father's consent, so in fear and trembling she told him what she had done. Dr Burney was much amused. That his quiet "old lady" should become an authoress seemed to him the best of jokes. He promised to keep her secret, and did not trouble any further about the matter.

The book was published anonymously in January 1778, and Fanny received twenty pounds in payment. It was advertised in *The London Chronicle*, and Mrs Burney innocently read out the announcement at the breakfast-table one morning, while Fanny held down her head and blushed, and Susan and Charlotte looked at each other in secret delight. Dr Burney had almost forgotten about his daughter's book, and it was June before he thought enough about it to buy a copy. He read the introductory ode, which was dedicated to him, and was delighted with it, and as he went on with the story he grew more and more enthusiastic about it. "The stuff reads better the second time than the first," he told Fanny; "and thou hast made thy old father laugh and cry at thy pleasure." Next came news that the book had been praised by Dr Johnson. Fanny, who was at the time staying with Daddy Crisp at Chessington, went almost wild with delight. "There are passages in it, the great man declares," wrote Susan, "which might do honour to Richardson." "Dr Johnson's approbation! it almost crazed me with agreeable surprise—it gave me



such a flight of spirits that I danced a jig to Mr Crisp, without any preparation, music or explanation—to his no small amusement and diversion.” Mr Crisp was not yet in the secret. Fanny had been reading *Evelina* to him, and he had grown deeply interested in the story, but he knew nothing of its author until Dr Burney, when he came in August to fetch Fanny home, told him the great news.

Gradually the secret of the authorship of *Evelina* became known, and Fanny found herself for a time the most famous person in London. Everyone wanted to see her and speak to her, and she was invited to all sorts of grand parties. She went to Streatham, to the house of Dr Johnson’s friend, Mrs Thrale, and there she met the great man himself. She had seen him some years before at her father’s house, but he had taken little notice of the quiet, shrinking girl, who had done nothing to attract his attention. Now he could not make enough of his “little Burney.” He sang her praises everywhere, and treated her in a fatherly, caressing fashion that flattered and delighted her.

Praises of *Evelina* still poured in. “Do, Mr Lowndes, give me *Evelina*,” the ladies said, “I am treated as unfashionable for not having read it.” Sir Joshua Reynolds sat up all night to finish it. “Burke doats on it; he began it one morning at seven o’clock, and could not leave it a moment; he sat up all night reading it. He says he has not seen such a book, he can’t tell when.” “Are they all mad?” exclaimed happy Fanny Burney, “or do they want to make me so?”

We will look at *Evelina* and see what it was in it that so delighted all these great people. It is written in the form of letters, as are Richardson’s works, and most of the letters are by *Evelina* herself. Here is a passage which specially pleased Dr Johnson. *Evelina* tells her guardian how, much against her will, she spent an evening at the opera in the company of her grandmother and a family of her vulgar relations, named Branghton. The family consisted of the father, one son, and two daughters



In a short time we arrived at one of the doorkeeper's bars. Mr Branghton demanded for what part of the house they took money. They answered, the pit; and regarded us all with great earnestness. The son, then advancing, said, "Sir, if you please, I beg that I may treat Miss."

"We'll settle that another time," answered Mr Branghton, and put down a guinea.

The guinea he was told would only pay for two seats, not six, so in great indignation he went off, his party following, to find something cheaper. After much argument with various officials, he finally brought his party to the highest and cheapest gallery in the house, where they all, except Evelina, began to grumble mightily, and they continued grumbling throughout the performance.

At the end of the first act, as the green curtain dropped to prepare for the dance, they imagined that the opera was done, and Mr Branghton expressed great indignation that he had been *tricked* out of his money with so little trouble. . . . Before the conclusion of the third act he found still more fault with the opera for being too long; and wondered whether they thought their singing good enough to serve us for supper. . . . During the symphony of a song of Signor Millico's in the second act young Mr Branghton said, "It's my belief that that fellow's going to sing another song! why there's nothing but singing!—I wonder when they'll speak."

Signor Millico was the most famous singer of the day, and Fanny Burney admired him intensely. She had heard him both at the opera and at her father's house; and now she makes Evelina feel as much delight in his singing as she feels herself. But the Branghtons believe she is only pretending to enjoy it.

"So, Miss," said Mr Branghton, "you're quite in the fashion, I see; so you like operas? well, I'm not so polite; I can't like nonsense, let it be never so much the taste."

"But pray, Miss," said the son, "what makes that fellow look so dolcful while he is singing?"

"Probably because the character he performs is in distress."

"Why, then, I think he might as well let alone singing till he is in better cue: it's out of all nature for a man to be piping when he's in distress. For my part I never sing but when I'm merry; yet I love a song as well as most people."



When the curtain dropped they all rejoiced.

"How do *you* like it?" and "How do *you* like it?" passed from one to another with looks of the utmost contempt.

"As for me," said Mr Branghton, "they've caught me once, but if ever they do again, I'll give 'em leave to sing me to Bedlam for my pains; for such a heap of stuff never did I hear; there isn't one ounce of sense in the whole opera, nothing but one continual squeaking and squalling from beginning to end."

"If I had been in the pit," said Madame Duval, "I should have liked it vastly, for music is my passion; but sitting in such a place as this is quite unbearable."

Miss Branghton, looking at me, declared that she was not *genteel* enough to admire it.

Miss Polly confessed that if they would but sing *English* she would like it *very well*.

The brother wished he could raise a riot in the house, because then he might get his money again.

And, finally, they all agreed that it was *monstrous dear*.

Dr Burney was overjoyed at his daughter's success, and was as eager and interested now in all that concerned her writings as before he had been indifferent. He urged her not to wait too long before she published another book, and so Fanny gave up some of her pleasant engagements and set about this new work. In 1782 her second novel, *Cecilia, or The Adventures of an Heiress*, was published. It is not quite as fresh and natural as *Evelina*; it was not written, as the first book had been, out of a pure delight in writing. It was a task, though a task Fanny loved; and as she wrote she could not help feeling a little anxious that *Cecilia* should be as well received as *Evelina*. In some ways the second book was better than the first. Fanny had become more skilful in putting her story together, in contriving a good plot, and showing her characters in striking situations. She had seen a good deal more of the world and had talked and been talked to as well as sitting and listening; and so she could draw a greater variety of characters, and make her picture fuller and more lively. *Cecilia* is much longer than *Evelina* and is in ordinary narrative form, not in letters. Its heroine is as beautiful and accomplished as *Evelina*, but has



less simplicity of character. She is an orphan and an heiress, and has three guardians, who are none of them equal in any way to Mr Villars. One is a spendthrift, one a miser, and the third a fine gentleman who is so proud of his birth and position that he behaves to everybody with insufferable arrogance. Cecilia first tries living in the house of the spendthrift, but finding this unbearable turns to the miser, Mr Briggs. He shows her into a wretched room

containing no other furniture than two worn-out rush-bottomed chairs, an old wooden box, and a bit of broken glass that was fastened to the wall by two bent nails.

"See here, my little chick," cried he, "everything ready! and a box for your gimcracks into the bargain."

"You don't mean this place for me, sir!" cried Cecilia, staring.

"Do, do," cried he, "a deal nicer by and by. Only wants a little furbishing; soon put to rights. Never sweep a room out of use; only wears out brooms for nothing."

"But, sir, can I not have an apartment on the first floor?"

"No, no, something else to do with it; belongs to the club; secrets in all things! Make this do well enough. Come again next week; wear quite a new face. Nothing wanting but a table; pick you up one at a broker's."

"But I am obliged, sir, to leave Mr Harrel's house directly."

"Well, well, make shift without a table at first; no great matter if you ha'n't one at all, nothing particular to do with it. Want another blanket though. Know where to get one; a very good broker hard by. Understand how to deal with him! A close dog, but warm."

"I have also two servants, sir," said Cecilia.

"Won't have 'em. Shan't come! Eat me out of house and home."

There are many other characters in the book as strongly drawn as Mr Briggs, and Cecilia's career is much more agitating and exciting than Evelina's. Everyone was delighted with the book, and it was praised even more loudly than the first work had been—so loudly, indeed, that the sounds reached the ears of George III and Queen Caroline, and brought on Miss Burney a surprising mark of royal favour. She was offered an appointment as Junior Keeper of the Robes to the Queen, and by her father's advice she accepted it.



The next five years were spent in this office. Fanny Burney, who had been the admired and flattered favourite of London society, was shut up in a royal palace with few companions, hard and trying work, and scarcely an hour in the day she could certainly call her own. The Queen was kind, and Fanny regarded her with reverential affection. But any ordinary woman could have done what she was required to do in the palace; it was a waste of genius for Fanny Burney to be called to such tasks. For those five years she wrote nothing except her diary, which is a wonderful record both of life in the royal household and of the public events in which Fanny, through her position in attendance on the Queen, took part. She was not strong, and the trying work, to which she was unaccustomed, completely broke down her health; yet it was a long time before she ventured to ask the "sweet Queen," as she nearly always called her royal mistress, for permission to give up her post. The permission was granted, and after some delay Fanny left the Queen's service in 1791.

For a time she travelled for her health and attempted no sort of work. Then in 1792 she met General D'Arblay, a Frenchman of noble family who had been driven from his country by the Revolution. In 1793 she married him and became Madame D'Arblay. They were poor, for General D'Arblay had not been able to save any of his property when the Revolution came, and Fanny had only the pension of two hundred pounds allowed her by the Queen. A little son was born to them in 1794; and in 1796 Mme D'Arblay published her third novel, *Camilla*.

It was not nearly as good as either of the others; the freshness and naturalness had completely disappeared, and the style had become a little heavy and tedious. The story was interesting and the characterization good, and the moral tone of the book was just what that part of society which still held to the old views and the old manners required. *Camilla* was published by subscription, and all Fanny's friends of earlier days hastened to put their names down on the list, so that a



large sum of money was received, with which she bought a country house in Surrey and gratefully called it "Camilla Cottage."

For nearly five years she and her husband and her little boy lived contentedly in this quiet retreat. But money was still scarce, and in 1801 General D'Arblay went back to France to see if he could regain any part of his confiscated property. He was unsuccessful, but was given a post under the Government, and his wife and son came to Paris to join him. Mme D'Arblay meant to stay for a year, but the war obliged her to remain for ten years. She still kept her diary, and wrote vivid accounts of the stirring scenes in Paris during the years of Napoleon's rule. In 1812 she managed to get back to England, and in 1814 she published her fourth novel, *The Wanderer*.

This showed a great falling-off in power, though it was well received by all Mme D'Arblay's old friends. But nobody could say very much in its favour after they had read it, and nobody now thinks of trying to get through it. It is astonishing to think that such a dull, wearisome book was written by the same author who wrote *Evelina*.

When peace was made in 1815 General D'Arblay came back to England, and their quiet life began again. In 1818 he died, and Fanny came to live in London, where she occupied herself in preparing her *Memoirs of Dr Burney*. Her son died in 1837; she herself lived on for three more years and died at the age of eighty-seven.



---

## Chapter XXIX

### THE NEW POETRY

#### I. WILLIAM COWPER

WE will come back now to the small company that had enthusiastically received Thomson's *Seasons*, and had learned by heart Gray's *Elegy* and Collins' *Ode to Evening*. That company was steadily growing, and the circumstances of the time were—though perhaps at first it may seem strange to say so—helping its growth.

The two things that were having the strongest influence on the condition of England were the growth of the big manufacturing towns in the North and the preaching of John Wesley. In the Northern counties great industries had been established, and great towns had grown up where a little while before had been villages or open country. Workers flocked to these districts, where their labour was so greatly needed. Manufacturers in their haste to get rich did all they could to draw men and women to their factories; they even seized on the little children and made use of the labour that their small hands could do. Nobody had any time to see that decent houses were built for these people, or churches or schools; nobody took any trouble to see that they were properly treated. Nothing seemed to matter except that the mines and the mills and the factories should be kept going as hard as they could, earning gold and yet more gold for their owners. The new state of things was so different from any that had gone before, and it had come about so suddenly, that no one was prepared to meet it, and for a time no one seemed to see what it really meant. Even kindly and pious men believed that the factories were an unmixed blessing to the people, and exulted in the thought that through these factories even little children of six or seven were able to serve their country.



But after a time the eyes of the nation began to open, and the conscience of the nation began to awake. Englishmen saw that what had brought wealth to the owners had brought misery to the workers. They saw that a large part of their country which had been before a beautiful and peaceful place had changed to a region of noise and dirt and ugliness. The more enlightened among the manufacturers began to realize what a terrible state of things had grown up, and to do their best to improve it, but things had become so bad that the task of putting them right was a long and difficult one. All over the country there was a cry for reform, and the workers themselves, ignorant and oppressed as they were, began to understand their wrongs and demand that they should be righted. So began the movement for industrial reform which, slowly at first, but gathering strength as it went on, has continued to our own days and is still advancing.

As was quite natural, the workers' thoughts turned first to revolution. Revolutionary ideas were in the air all over Europe. In France the people were almost ready to put them into practice. In England there were few signs of serious trouble, but there was a good deal of grumbling and discontent, and a band of more or less violent revolutionaries was slowly forming.

Meantime the preaching of John Wesley and his followers was moving all England. In the crowded, noisome Yorkshire towns, on wild Northumberland moors, in the filthy London alleys where thieves gathered and ruffians brawled and fought, they preached fearlessly the Word of God. George Whitefield, standing on a green knoll at Kingswood, looked down on twenty thousand colliers from Bristol and saw as he preached to them "the tears making white channels down their blackened cheeks." From Cornwall to Kent went the message, and though the messengers were often roughly treated, were mocked and stoned, ducked in pools and pelted with mud, they were never silenced. Everywhere they roused the most passionate enthusiasm; there were wild sobs, and violent out-



bursts of emotion, and vows to lead new lives according to the will of Christ. The sluggards inside the Church were roused, and there too there was a great awakening. A new party arose, resolved that their own zeal should outdo the zeal of the Methodists, as the followers of Wesley were called, and in many places where there had been indifference and worldliness there was now unselfish devotion. Great movements were set on foot to reform the prisons, to free the slaves, to preach the Gospel to the heathen. Sunday schools were instituted for the children, and hospitals built for the sick. Men began to see dimly what were the obligations of the happy and the fortunate toward the miserable and the fallen, and to realize something of what was meant by a brotherhood in Christ.

And what had all this to do with the country's books? It had, really, a very great deal to do with them. First it gave rise to a special political and revolutionary literature, which was very eagerly read at the time; but few of these works have much value or interest for readers of a later day, and we shall not say anything further about them here. Next it gave a strong religious tone to many of the works that were written. We have seen how the revival brought about by Wesley had, in its very early stages, produced a great deal of religious verse; and, later, it influenced almost every book that was written. Thirdly, it made men look more closely and sympathetically at the lives of their humbler fellow-countrymen, and to find that interesting and touching stories could be written about them. Fourthly, it inclined them to turn with relief from the turmoil and ugliness of town life, with all the obligations and perplexities that it brought, to visions of the countryside, with its beauty and its peace.

Therefore, when in 1785 a long poem was published, full of simple, homely pictures of country scenes and country occupations, and of a sincere and humble piety, there were many people eager to read it. The poem was called *The Task*, and its author's name was William Cowper. There were people in London who remembered William Cowper. Nearly twenty



years before he had been a young law-student, living happily enough in chambers in the Temple. He was shy and quiet and deeply religious, and at times he had terrible fits of depression which took away almost all his natural quiet cheerfulness and brought him almost to despair. When the time came for him to take up the office his friends had procured for him as clerk to the House of Lords he shrank in terror from making an appearance before such an assembly. His fit of depression deepened and became a kind of religious melancholia; he tried to take his own life, and for eighteen months was shut up in a private asylum for the insane. When he recovered his friends found him a quiet home in the town of Huntingdon, and after that little was heard of him. In 1779 he had published a collection of hymns, and in 1782 a volume of poems, but neither had gained very much notice. Only when *The Task* came did people recognize that here was a new poet and a new kind of poetry.

In a passage of *The Task* Cowper tells something of the life he had led since he left London in 1764:

I was a stricken deer, that left the herd  
Long since. With many an arrow deep infix'd  
My panting side was charged, when I withdrew  
To seek a tranquil death in distant shades.  
There was I found by One who had Himself  
Been hurt by the archers. In His side He bore,  
And in His hands and feet, the cruel scars.  
With gentle force soliciting the darts,  
He drew them forth, and heal'd, and bade me live.  
Since then, with few associates, in remote  
And silent woods I wander, far from those  
My former partners of the peopled scene;  
With few associates, and not wishing more.

He told the story much more fully in his letters, written to various friends. During the time of his madness, he says, he was tortured by the belief that the wrath of God had fallen upon him. Fortunately his doctor was both wise and kind, and under his gentle treatment the poor tormented mind gradually recovered; until one morning Cowper woke up feeling calm and cheerful once more. He opened his Bible and read



the first verse on which his eyes fell. "Immediately I received strength to believe, and the full beams of the Sun of Righteousness shone upon me." All his misery had vanished. The earth seemed more beautiful than it had ever done before, and life seemed a good and lovely thing.

He was still in this mood of perfect happiness when he came to Huntingdon. He rode about the country, which was flat and not very beautiful; but to him everything was fair. He wandered by the slow-flowing Ouse, thinking of God's goodness and the mercy that had been shown toward him. Sometimes he rode out to meet his brother, who was living at Cambridge, but for the most part he was alone. For a time this did not trouble him. He did not wish to join in any of the gaieties of the town, for he belonged to the Evangelical party in the Church, and their way of life was as strict as that of the Methodists. He talked, he says, only to a few "odd scrambling fellows" he met in his walks.

Gradually there came a change. The old fits of depression seemed to be coming back. "The communion which I had so long been able to maintain with the Lord was suddenly interrupted," he says. He began to feel lonely. Winter was coming on, and the thought of the long, dark days that he must pass without any pleasant companionship increased his gloom. Then one day, as he came out of the church after morning service, a young man came up and spoke to him, and almost as soon as the first words were spoken Cowper knew that he had found a friend. The stranger told him that his name was William Unwin. He was the son of a clergyman living in Huntingdon and he was preparing to be a clergyman himself. Like Cowper he was a fervent Evangelical and strict in his way of life. He invited Cowper to visit his home and make the acquaintance of his family, and to the young man living in unhappy solitude it seemed as if the sun had shone out once more. Very gladly he went with his new friend, and found a quiet, cheerful, religious household, exactly suited to his temper. More especially he was attracted to Mrs Unwin,



his friend's mother, and at once she seemed to understand him. She saw how shy and sensitive and tender-hearted he was, and she knew that he was not fit to meet the troubles and hardships of life alone. Before very long the two were firm friends. Cowper wrote:

I met Mrs Unwin in the street, and went home with her. She and I walked together near two hours in the garden, and had a conversation that did me more good than I should have received from an audience with the first prince in Europe. That woman is a blessing to me, and I never see her without being the better for her company.

Before long it was suggested that Cowper should become a boarder in the Unwins' house. He went gladly and gratefully, feeling that now there would be no more loneliness. He was glad, too, because it would lessen his expenses, for he had no money beyond a small allowance made to him by his friends. Here he lived quietly and happily for more than a year, and this is how their days were spent:

We breakfast commonly between eight and nine; till eleven, we read either the Scripture or the sermons of some faithful preacher of those holy mysteries; at eleven we attend divine service, which is performed here twice every day, and from twelve to three we separate and amuse ourselves as we please. During that interval I either read in my own apartment, or walk, or ride, or work in the garden. We seldom sit an hour after dinner, but if the weather permits adjourn to the garden, where with Mrs Unwin and her son I have generally the pleasure of religious conversation till tea-time. If it rains, or is too windy for walking, we either converse within doors, or sing some hymns of Martin's collection, and by the help of Mrs Unwin's harpsichord, make up a tolerable concert, in which our hearts I hope are the best performers. After tea we sally forth to walk in good earnest. Mrs Unwin is a good walker, and we have generally travelled about four miles before we reach home again. When the days are short, we make this excursion in the former part of the day, between church-time and dinner. At night we read and converse as before until supper, and commonly finish the evening either with hymns or a sermon, and last of all the family are called to prayers. I need not tell you that such a life as this is consistent with the utmost cheerfulness; accordingly we are all happy, and dwell together in unity as brethren.



In July 1767 Mr Unwin was killed by a fall from his horse. His son had already left Huntingdon; only Cowper and Mrs Unwin were left. They removed to Olney in Buckinghamshire, where a Mr John Newton, a friend of Mrs Unwin's son, was the Vicar. This John Newton was a very noted character among the Evangelicals. He had been a sailor, had been shipwrecked, taken for a slave, and treated with the greatest cruelty; he had had a marvellous escape from drowning, which had brought about his conversion; he had turned slave-dealer, and for some years had brought cargoes of negroes from Africa and sold them in other parts of the world; he had been convinced of the wickedness of this trade and had given it up; and then had become an ordained minister of the English Church. He was famed for his rousing sermons, which had the strongest effect upon his hearers; as he said, his "name was up about the country for preaching people mad."

He was not the best kind of friend for delicate, sensitive William Cowper, though he felt at once a strong interest in him and was eager to guide and serve him. Mrs Unwin and Cowper lived in a house which was next to Newton's own. It was a damp, gloomy house in the poorest part of a mean little town. Most of the inhabitants were poor, half-starved lace-makers who were crowded into unhealthy houses on the low banks of the marshy Ouse. There was no pleasant society, there were no country walks, no healthy breezes. Cowper and Mrs Unwin had no one to talk to except Mr John Newton, and nothing to do except read and visit the poor. But things became even worse when Mr Newton induced Cowper to come to his prayer-meetings and address the rough crowd of labourers, many of them of a low and brutal type, that the energy of the Vicar had managed to gather together. To do this was agony to the shy Cowper; and the earnest admonitions and fervid teaching of Mr Newton were more than his nervous, sensitive temperament could bear. The old fits of depression came back, and in 1773 madness, such as he had suffered before, fell upon him.



There was now no wise and kind physician to help him. Mrs Unwin nursed him with the greatest devotion, and John Newton prayed with him and exhorted him, but in vain. For eighteen months he suffered all his former agonies, believing that he had drawn God's anger upon himself and was doomed to eternal punishment. At last even his two friends saw that a doctor must be called in, and under his skilled treatment Cowper recovered. It was a happy thing for Cowper that shortly after this John Newton left Olney, and he was left in peace, and free from the religious excitement that the strong and powerful preacher always stirred up. Mrs Unwin saw that what he wanted was some light occupation which would interest and amuse without tiring him. She induced him to take up carpentering and gardening, and to keep tame hares as pets. Cowper had three of these—Tiny, Puss, and Bess—and they gave him many hours of enjoyment. He described their doings in his letters to his friends in the most charming and playful fashion. His letters are almost as celebrated as his poems. This is how he related the adventures of his truant Puss to John Newton:

Last Wednesday night while we were at supper, between the hours of eight and nine, I heard an unusual noise in the back parlour, as if one of the hares was entangled, and endeavouring to disengage herself. I was just going to rise from table when it ceased. In about five minutes, a voice on the outside of the parlour door inquired if one of my hares had got away. I immediately rushed into the next room, and found that my poor favourite Puss had made her escape.

She had gnawed in sunder the strings of a lattice-work, with which I thought I had sufficiently secured the window, and which I preferred to any other sort of blind, because it admitted plenty of air. From thence I hastened to the kitchen, where I saw the redoubtable Thomas Freeman, who told me that having seen her just after she had dropped into the street, he attempted to cover her with his hat, but she screamed out, and leaped directly over his head. I then desired him to pursue as fast as possible, and added Richard Coleman to the chase, as being nimbler and carrying less weight than Thomas; not expecting to see her again, but desiring to learn, if possible, what became of her. In something less than an hour Richard returned, almost breathless, with



the following account. That soon after he began to run, he left Tom behind him, and came in sight of a most numerous hunt of men, women, children, and dogs; that he did his best to keep back the dogs, and presently outstripped the crowd, so that the race was at last disputed between himself and Puss; she ran right through the town, and down the lane that leads to Dropshort; a little before she came to the house, he got the start and turned her; she pushed for the town again, and soon after she entered it sought shelter in Mr Wagstaff's tanyard, adjoining to old Mr Drake's.

Sturges's harvest men were at supper, and saw her from the opposite side of the way.

There she encountered the tanpits full of water; and while she was struggling out of one pit and plunging into another, and almost drowned, one of the men drew her out by the ears and secured her. She was then well washed in a bucket to get the lime out of her coat, and brought home in a sack at ten o'clock.

This frolic cost us four shillings, but you may believe we did not grudge a farthing of it.

The poor creature received only a little hurt in one of her claws, and in one of her ears, and is now almost as well as ever.

But even the hares could not occupy Cowper's mind sufficiently to keep off the dark thoughts that would return and torment him, so Mrs Unwin urged him to try to write poetry. He had been used to write verses in his youth, and had composed some hymns for John Newton; and now he wrote a poem on *The Progress of Error*, and followed it with some *Moral Satires*. They were not very great poems, but they did what they were meant to do—kept Cowper's mind occupied and himself cheerful and happy.

In 1781 Cowper made a new friend. He was looking out of the window one fine morning when he saw two ladies crossing the street. One he knew; she was a Mrs Jones, the wife of a neighbouring clergyman; the other was a stranger, but he liked the look of her so much that he begged Mrs Unwin to go out at once and ask the two ladies to tea that afternoon. They came; but by that time Cowper's shyness had returned, and it was a long time before he could find courage to go into the room and meet them. He did so at last, and spent a delightful evening. The lady, he found, was Lady Austen, sister to Mrs Jones and widow of a baronet. Soon he and she



became great friends. He called her Sister Anne, read his poems to her, and listened with delight to her lively comments. She amused and cheered him, sang to him, told him stories, drew him on to talk to her. One evening she told him a story of a London draper who started out for a holiday on horse-back and met with all sorts of ridiculous adventures. The story tickled Cowper immensely, and after he went up to bed that night the other people in the house heard peal after peal of laughter coming from his room. In the morning he brought down a poem, and read it to them. It began:

John Gilpin was a citizen  
Of credit and renown,  
A trained-band captain eke was he  
Of famous London town.

After a time Lady Austen took the house that had been John Newton's in order that she might have more of Cowper's society. One day she suggested to him that he should begin another long poem, and should try his hand at blank verse. "What shall I write about?" he asked. "Oh, anything. Write about this sofa." So Cowper began to write. He called his poem *The Task*, because it had been set him to do by Lady Austen. The first book he called *The Sofa*; beginning with the three-legged stool, he showed how this developed through four-legged stools, chairs, and elbow-chairs into a sofa. Next he talked about those who used sofas; and then of those who had no need of sofas, but could wander about the country and see all its beauties; and here came in some of his beautiful pictures of country scenes; and he ended with the line that has become famous—

God made the country and man made the town.

The second book he called *The Timepiece*, but there is not much about timepieces in it. It is really about patriotism and good government:

England, with all thy faults I love thee still,  
My country! and while yet a nook is left,  
Where English minds and manners may be found,  
Shall be constrained to love thee.



Then come four more books—*The Garden*, *The Winter Evening*, *The Winter Morning Walk*, *The Winter Walk at Noon*. The last three are the finest, and the most famous. Here is a passage from *The Winter Walk at Noon*:

The night was winter in his roughest mood ;  
The morning sharp and clear. But now at noon  
Upon the southern side of the slant hills,  
And where the woods fence off the northern blast,  
The season smiles, resigning all its rage,  
And has the warmth of May. The vault is blue  
Without a cloud, and white without a speck  
The dazzling splendour of the scene below. . . .  
No noise is here or none that hinders thought,  
The redbreast warbles still, but is content  
With slender notes, and more than half suppressed;  
Pleased with his solitude, and flitting light  
From spray to spray, where'er he rests he shakes  
From many a twig the pendant drops of ice,  
That tinkle in the withered leaves below.  
Stillness, accompanied with sounds so soft,  
Charms more than silence.

There is an indoor picture in *The Winter Evening* which shows the quiet pleasures that Cowper loved:

Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,  
Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,  
And, while the bubbling and loud-hissing urn  
Throws up a steamy column, and the cups,  
That cheer but not inebriate, wait on each,  
So let us welcome peaceful evening in. . . .  
O Winter! ruler of the inverted year, . . .  
I crown thee king of intimate delights,  
Fire-side enjoyments, home-born happiness,  
And all the comforts that the lowly roof  
Of undisturb'd Retirement, and the hours  
Of long, uninterrupted evening, know.

This was the poem that came, in 1785, to bring a welcome sense of comfort and peace to many weary people harassed by the ugliness and the turmoil of town life. It was read eagerly, and soon people began to talk about its author. Many of the friends who had known William Cowper when he was a young law-student, and had lost sight of him since, now learned of the retirement in which he had been living for the past twenty years. They wrote to him, eager to renew the old friendship.



Some urged him to come to London and enjoy the fame that he had won. He could have been admired and courted, a lion in London society, if he had wished. But to be the centre of a crowd was what Cowper hated; he could not have lived the life of a public favourite; and so he stayed in his quiet home and enjoyed his fame chiefly through the letters of his friends.

One of these friends was his cousin, Lady Hesketh. She persuaded Cowper and Mrs Unwin to remove from the cheerless house at Olney to a house in a higher and sunnier position not very far away. Here they lived happily for more than five years. Cowper's health was good, and money from his poems was coming in. He wrote no more long poems, but was kept cheerfully busy with a translation of Homer. *Alexander Selkirk*, which has been quoted in connexion with *Robinson Crusoe*, and *The Loss of the Royal George* were among the short poems he produced during these years.

But in 1791 the clouds gathered once more. Mrs Unwin fell ill, and Cowper devoted himself to her service. He nursed and tended her, trying to repay something of what he owed her for the care given to him in so many trials. Her illness dragged on through long, painful years until she died in 1796. Before that time Cowper had broken down. His fits of depression had returned and the terrible melancholia had again attacked him. Once more he felt that the wrath of God had fallen upon him and that he was eternally lost. The friends who loved him did everything they could to lighten the gloom in which he lived, but they could not really help him. The last poem that he wrote, *The Castaway*, is heartrending in its hopelessness; and there was little need for grief when, on the morning of April 25, 1800, very calmly and peacefully, he died.

## II. GEORGE CRABBE, THE REALIST

While William Cowper was living his quiet, sheltered life at Olney there was a youth, twenty years younger than he, growing up in the seaside town of Aldeburgh in Suffolk. His name



was George Crabbe; and he had no anxious friends to shield him from the harsh realities of life while he wrote the poems by which he was to be remembered. He had to make his own way, to toil and struggle and almost to starve while he strove to become a great poet. Fortunately he was of a harder, more practical nature than the gentle poet of Olney, and his religious feeling was of a more robust kind. His father was collector of salt duties at the harbour of Aldeburgh, and he was fond of poetry and used to read the works of Milton and Young and other poets aloud to his family. George went to school in the town, and after school wandered about the flat, open country around his home, learning to know it so well that he could describe particular spots with great exactness. It was decided that he should be a doctor; and so when he was fifteen years old he was apprenticed to a surgeon of Bury St Edmunds, and spent the next three years in his surgery, and four more years with another surgeon at Woodbridge. But he did not like medicine. He was much more interested in poetry, and when his day's work was done he would sit down and try to write poems himself. Young as he was, he looked at life very seriously. The verses which, in 1775, he managed to get published by an Ipswich bookseller were a very poor piece of work, written in imitation of Pope's *Essay on Man*, but they showed quite clearly the sort of poet this boy meant to be in the future. Here was no writer of fanciful verses, or painter of idealized pictures showing life as one would like it to be. George Crabbe meant to write of life as it really is, leaving out none of the ugliness, the meanness, the misery that he saw.

When his apprenticeship was over he went back to Aldeburgh and was appointed parish doctor. The next years were very unhappy ones. His father had a violent temper and was given to drinking; his mother suffered greatly through ill-health and domestic quarrels. George hated his work as a doctor, though for four years he stuck to it manfully. His chief support he found in his religious faith, which grew deeper and stronger with his trials, and his chief pleasure in the long walks



which he took in the country round about. It was not very interesting or beautiful country, but Crabbe had learned to love it in his boyhood, and he loved it still. He had one faithful friend, a Miss Sarah Elmy, whom he had met at Woodbridge, and whom, ten years later, he married.

In 1779 he took the desperate resolution of giving up his post and going up to London to try to make his living by writing. Sarah Elmy encouraged and helped him. She believed in his powers, and was anxious that he should leave a way of life in which he was so unhappy. So Crabbe came to London with three pounds and a bundle of poems in his pocket, and there followed two hard and bitter years, in which more than once he came very near to starvation. He managed to get one poem published, but very little notice was taken of it, and it brought him in no money. He left copies of his poems at the doors of statesmen and other important people, hoping to find a patron. Nobody listened to or helped him; until at last, when he had pawned everything except the clothes he wore and was hopelessly in debt, Edmund Burke came to his rescue. Burke had read the poems left at his house, and had at once seen how good they were; he had read the letter that came with them, so sad, and proud, and almost despairing, and his warm, generous heart had been touched. He took the poor poet from his miserable lodgings to his own house in St James's Street. He read carefully his store of poems, and advised him which to publish; and finally one called *The Library* was selected. He introduced Crabbe to influential persons who could help him in various ways. Dr Johnson revised his poems, and Lord Chancellor Thurlow gave him a hundred pounds.

*The Library* was published, and Burke took care that it should be read. It was not a very striking or original poem, and, like Crabbe's earlier venture, it read like an imitation of Pope; but it had in it the promise of better things.

Crabbe's worst days were now over. Burke, finding that he had a great wish to be a clergyman, helped him to prepare for his ordination, and then found him, first a curacy at Aldeburgh,



and then a chaplaincy in the household of the Duke of Rutland. Here the poet had work that he loved, freedom from anxiety, leisure to write his poems, and the prospect of soon being able to marry his faithful and dearly loved Sarah Elmy. He worked hard, and by 1783 he had a new poem ready to be published; and this time it was a poem that showed Crabbe's real quality.

It was called *The Village*, and it described his native town of Aldeburgh, as he had seen it in those unhappy days when he had doctored the poorest and most miserable of its inhabitants, and had spent his leisure in roaming over the wind-swept spaces around it and learning all that he could about the flowers and the birds to be found on them. In his descriptions Crabbe would have none of the pretty imagery that poets before him had used. He would not write of shepherd-boys piping to country maids with flower-bound tresses. He would not even do as Goldsmith and Cowper had done, and look upon the happy and peaceful side of a countryman's hard-working life. When *The Village* came out many people must have contrasted it with the lovely *Deserted Village* that had appeared fourteen years before. Crabbe declared that his aim was to show "the real Picture of the Poor":

I paint the Cot,  
As Truth will paint it, and as Bards will not.

He told of hard work on a poor soil, where "the thin harvest waves its withered ears," and of the workman coming home to the misery of a stinted meal in a cheerless cottage, where in winter the children gather round the "feeble fire," while the pale mother "turns on the wretched hearth th' expiring brand." Old age, he said, had no honour, and no well-earned rest; the poor man "journeys to his grave in pain," until at last,

by disease oppressed,  
They taste a final woe and then they rest.

Then there is the poor-house, where the destitute and the sick live miserably, cared for by a harsh doctor who scorns them and their pains.



In haste he seeks the bed where misery lies,  
Impatience marked in his averted eyes;  
And some habitual queries hurried o'er,  
Without reply, he rushes to the door.

The parish clergyman is no better.

He "passing rich with forty pounds a year?"  
Ah! No. A Shepherd of a different stock  
And far unlike him, feeds this little flock:  
A jovial youth, who thinks his Sunday's task  
As much as God or man can fairly ask;  
The rest he gives to loves and labours light,  
To fields the morning and to feasts the night.  
None better skilled the noisy pack to guide,  
To urge the chase, to cheer them or to chide.

In this hard life there are a few "gleams of transient mirth  
and hours of sweet repose":

On a fair Sunday when the sermon ends;  
Then rural beaux their best attire put on,  
To win their nymphs, as other nymphs are won;  
While those long wed go plain, and by degrees,  
Like other husbands, quit their care to please.  
Some of the sermon talk, a sober crowd,  
And loudly praise, if it were preached aloud;  
Some on the labours of the week look round,  
Feel their own worth and think their toil renowned;  
While some, whose hopes to no renown extend,  
Are only pleased to find their labours end.

This is Crabbe's picture of village life. Byron has called him  
"Nature's sternest painter, yet her best"; but if earlier poets  
had perhaps erred in leaving out the darker side Crabbe goes  
to the other extreme and shows it as almost unrelieved black-  
ness. Even when he describes the wildflowers which to most  
people seem so beautiful he manages to make them darken,  
not brighten, the picture:

Rank weeds, that every art and care defy,  
Reign o'er the land and rob the blighted rye;  
There thistles stretch their prickly arms afar,  
And to the ragged infant threaten war;  
There poppies nodding mock the hope of toil;

Hardy and high, above the slender sheaf,  
The slimy mallow waves her silky leaf;  
O'er the young shoot the charlock throws a shade,  
And clasping tares cling round the sickly blade;



With mingled tints the rocky coasts abound,  
And a sad splendour vainly shines around.

*The Village* had many readers, partly because, as we have seen, people were beginning to realize how hard and dreary was the lot of the poor man, and that it was the duty of those who were more fortunate to help him. Crabbe did not comfort and strengthen them as Cowper was to do a little later. He stirred their consciences and touched their hearts, and made them feel more keenly than they had felt before into what a desperate plight the country had fallen. Many found the poem disappointing, because it gave no help in answering the questions it raised, and no suggestion as to what might be done to turn ugliness and misery into beauty and happiness. But Crabbe did not set out to teach or to help. His art was simply to show things as they were, and leave the rest to his readers.

A few months after *The Village* was published Crabbe married Sarah Elmy. They lived first in Belvoir Castle, the home of the Duke of Rutland; afterward Crabbe became Vicar of Muston, and worked hard and faithfully in his parish. For twenty-four years he wrote no more poems, except one which has no great merit, *The Newspaper*. Then in October 1807, when he was fifty-three years old, he published a volume containing *The Library*, *The Village*, *The Newspaper*, and another long poem called *The Parish Register*. In this poem a parish priest is shown looking through his register and recalling the stories connected with the people whose births, marriages, or deaths are recorded there. It is as realistic as *The Village*, and in parts as gloomy; but some of the stories have cheerful and happy scenes; Muston was perhaps not so miserable or neglected as Aldeburgh.

Three years later came *The Borough*, another series of stories drawn chiefly from the poet's recollections of Aldeburgh; in 1812 came a volume of *Tales*, and in 1819 *Tales of the Hall*. All these poems were well received and won for him fame and a high position among the writers of the day; although, as we



shall see, a great change had come over English poetry since his first writings had appeared in 1783. But he had many faithful admirers, among them Byron and Sir Walter Scott, and these made a company large enough to keep his name in honour. His wife died in 1813. In 1814 he was given the living of Trowbridge. There he lived happily for eighteen years; and there, in 1832, at the age of seventy-eight, he died.

### III. ROBERT BURNS, THE SINGER

Three years after *The Village* was published there came a small volume of poems written by a young Scotsman named Robert Burns, who knew a great deal more about the life of the country poor than even Crabbe knew. For Robert Burns was himself a poor working man, and he, and his father before him, had lived the laborious life of the peasant who must gain his bread by tilling a poor, unfruitful soil. Robert had been born in a small, clay-built cottage near the town of Ayr which his father, William Burns, had built with his own hands. Brothers and sisters had followed Robert, until the "auld clay biggin" was crowded with children, and the anxious, hard-working parents had as much as they could do to provide them with enough "halesome parritch" to make them strong, hearty boys and girls. William Burns was a gardener, a sober, frugal, industrious man, whom his children remembered and spoke of with pride all their lives long. His poet son drew his portrait in *The Cottar's Saturday Night*, and showed how this simple, pious, saintly man tried to bring up his family in godly ways:

The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,  
 They, round the ingle, form a circle wide;  
 The sire turns o'er, wi' patriarchal grace,  
 The big ha'-Bible, ance his father's pride;  
 His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,  
 His lyart haffets <sup>1</sup> wearing thin an' bare;  
 Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,

---

<sup>1</sup> grey locks.



He wales<sup>1</sup> a portion with judicious care;  
And "Let us worship God!" he says, with solemn air.

He tried, too, to give his family a good education, for he had a great respect for learning, and though he had had little schooling he had taught himself a great deal by his eager reading of every book that came in his way.

When Robert Burns was seven years old his father tried to improve the family fortunes by taking a small farm; but the soil was poor, and there was no money to employ labourers to till and manure it. The boys, young as they were, must help; and Robert and his brother Gilbert toiled beside their father, doing the utmost their strength would allow. The good father became more and more anxious and careworn, but he did not give up the hope of making his sons scholars. As soon as it was possible he, with four of his neighbours, engaged a young schoolmaster, who boarded with each family in turn and was paid a small salary for teaching the children. When, after a time, the schoolmaster left, William Burns taught his sons himself in the evenings, after his day of hard toil, and he encouraged them to read and learn for themselves, as he had done. He had collected a small store of good books, such as are not usually found in the house of a poor farmer; and at every moment they could be spared from the fields the children seized on these and read them until they almost knew them by heart. A visitor coming one day into the farmhouse at dinner-time found the whole family seated at the table with a book in one hand and a spoon in the other. Robert especially loved books with passion. "No book," says his brother Gilbert, "was so voluminous as to slacken his industry or so antiquated as to damp his researches." When he was about sixteen he somehow got hold of a book called *A Select Collection of English Songs*. "I pored over them," he said, "driving my cart or walking to labour, song by song, verse by verse."

In 1777 the Burns family moved to a better farm and

<sup>1</sup> chooses.



became more prosperous. Robert was eighteen now, and was beginning to write some of the songs of which Scotland is still proud. Many of these were love-songs. The bright-eyed, handsome lad, with his ready tongue and his free, careless ways, was a favourite with all the lasses round, and was constantly falling in love with one or other of them. "My heart," he says, "was completely tender, and was eternally lighted up by some goddess or another." He wrote verses to these goddesses—verses so fresh and tender and tuneful that none could resist them.

The lads liked him, too, and were eager to work by his side even at hard and unpleasant jobs, because his high spirits and his gay talk made the work seem light. It was the same wherever he went. In the summer of 1781 he and his brother Gilbert went to the town of Irvine to learn flax-dressing, and here too he very quickly became a general favourite. Some of the friends he made here were wild and riotous, and Robert learned their ways all too quickly. The teaching of his father was set aside, and he learned to look down on his father's religion as old-fashioned, and a hindrance to that complete freedom to do as one pleased which his new comrades taught him was the thing for a manly youth to desire. Robert was never the same lad again after those days at Irvine. His will was not strong enough to make him able to resist the bad influences he met with there.

When Robert was twenty-three years old his father died, grieving to the last over this brilliant, unstable son of his who was so easily led astray. For a time poor Robert was heart-broken. He loved his father dearly, and he knew how far he had gone from that father's teaching. He made earnest resolutions to amend, and for a time he and his brother Gilbert worked quietly together on a farm that they had taken at Mossgiel. But, work as hard as they would, they could not make the farm pay; and Robert, in his disappointment, went back to his old bad ways.

The poems that he wrote at this time show how much he



had changed for the worse. He had grown reckless and defiant. In *The Twa Herds*, *Holy Willie's Prayer*, *The Ordination*, and *The Holy Fair* he made fierce attacks upon the Church. This was partly because the minister of the parish had re-proved him for his wild ways, and partly because among his evil companions it was held to be manly to sneer at everything that had to do with religion. Yet for all his defiance he still held in his heart a passionate love for Scotland, and the homely, kindly life he had shared in his father's house seemed to him dearer and lovelier the farther he felt himself drifting from its noble teaching. So the wild, riotous, sometimes drunken Robert Burns wrote that beautiful tribute to his early home and to his father's memory that he called *The Cottar's Saturday Night*.

One day when Burns was ploughing he saw a daisy in the way, which his plough must destroy; and as he went on with his work he thought of this daisy, and made up some verses about it, which he wrote down as soon as he got home. He began:

Wee, modest, crimson-tipped flower,  
Thou's met me in an evil hour;  
For I must crush amang the stoure<sup>1</sup>  
Thy slender stem;  
To spare thee now is past my power,  
Thou bonnie gem.

He went on to praise this little flower for holding its head up cheerfully amid biting winds and storms, while the showier garden blossoms could not do without shelter and sunshine; and he grieved that now the brave, humble daisy must be cut down. Its fate reminded him of the fate of many good and luckless men, and he drew a comparison:

Such fate to suffering worth is given,  
Who long with wants and woes has striven,  
By human pride or cunning driven  
To misery's brink,  
Till wrenched of every stay but Heaven,  
He, ruined, sink!

---

<sup>1</sup> dust.



## THE NEW POETRY

Another day he turned up a mouse in her nest with his plough, and of this incident too he made a poem:

Wee, sleekit, cow'rin', tim'rous beastie,  
O, what a panic's in thy breastie!  
Thou need na start awa sae hasty,  
                    Wi' bickerin' brattle!<sup>1</sup>  
I wad be laith to rin an' chase thee,  
                    Wi' murd'rin' pattle!<sup>2</sup>

I'm truly sorry man's dominion  
Has broken Nature's social union,  
An' justifies that ill opinion,  
                    Which makes thee startle  
At me, thy poor earth-born companion,  
                    An' fellow-mortal!

I doubt na, whyles, but thou mayst thieve;  
What then? poor beastie, thou maun live!  
A daimen-icker in a thrave<sup>3</sup>  
                    'S a sma' request:  
I'll get a blessin' wi' the lave,<sup>4</sup>  
                    An' never miss't!

Thy wee bit housie, too, in ruin!  
It's silly wa's the win's are strewin'!  
An' naething, now, to big<sup>5</sup> a new ane,  
                    O' foggage green!  
An' bleak December's winds ensuin',  
                    Baith snell<sup>6</sup> an' keen!

Thou saw the fields laid bare an' waste,  
An' weary winter comin' fast,  
An' cozie here, beneath the blast,  
                    Thou thought to dwell,  
Till, crash! the cruel coulter past  
                    Out thro' thy cell.

That wee bit heap o' leaves an' stibble  
Has cost thee mony a weary nibble!  
Now thou's turn'd out, for a' thy trouble,  
                    But house or hald,<sup>7</sup>  
To thole<sup>8</sup> the winter's sleety dribble  
                    An' cranreuch<sup>9</sup> could!

But, Mousie, thou art no' thy lane,<sup>10</sup>  
In proving foresight may be vain:

<sup>1</sup> hurry.

<sup>4</sup> the rest.

<sup>7</sup> Without house or holding.

<sup>2</sup> stick.

<sup>6</sup> build.

<sup>8</sup> endure.

<sup>3</sup> An ear of corn now and then.

<sup>6</sup> sharp.

<sup>9</sup> hoar-frost.

<sup>10</sup> alone.



The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men,  
                     Gang aft agley,<sup>1</sup>  
 An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain,  
                     For promised joy.

Still thou art blest, compar'd wi' me!  
 The present only toucheth thee;  
 But, och! I backward cast my e'e  
                     On prospects drear!  
 An' forward, tho' I canna see,  
                     I guess an' fear!

He sang many songs which Scotland still counts among the most glorious of the treasures her sons have given her. They came into his head while he was at work, and very often, like *To a Mouse* or *To a Mountain Daisy*, they were suggested by something he saw as he went about the farm.

The farmhouse of Mossgiel, which still exists unchanged since the days of the poet, is very small, consisting only of two rooms, a but and a ben, as they are called in Scotland. Over these, reached by a trap stair, is a small garret, in which Robert and his brother used to sleep. Thither, when he had returned from his day's work, the poet used to retire and seat himself at a small deal table, lighted by a narrow skylight in the roof, to transcribe the verses that he had composed in the fields. His favourite time for composition was at the plough. Long years afterwards his sister, Mrs Begg, used to tell how, when her brother had gone forth again to field work, she would steal up to the garret and search the drawer of the deal table for the verses which Robert had newly transcribed.<sup>2</sup>

After two years of hard and unsuccessful toil on the farm Burns felt he could go on no longer. He tried to find some other work, he scarcely cared what; and at length he obtained a post as overseer on a negro plantation in Jamaica. He had no money to pay his passage, so he collected what he thought were the best of the poems he had written and managed to get them published by subscription in Kilmarnock. The book appeared in July 1786, and then came the great surprise. The poor, disreputable, unhappy farmer became suddenly a famous man.

Old and young, high and low, grave and gay, learned and ignorant were alike delighted, agitated, transported. . . . Ploughboys and

<sup>1</sup> awry.

<sup>2</sup> Chambers' *Life of Robert Burns*.



maidservants would have gladly bestowed the wages they earned most hardly and which they wanted to purchase necessary clothing, if they might procure the works of Burns.

Here was a singer such as had not been heard in the land since the days of Elizabeth. It had seemed as if Englishmen and Scotsmen too were losing the great gift of song-making which had been theirs from early times, and now the gift was found again in the possession of a poor Scottish ploughman.

There was no more talk now of the negro plantation in Jamaica. Burns heard that in Edinburgh everyone was talking about his book—that the far-famed company of scholars and men of letters then gathered there had praised his poems with enthusiasm. To Edinburgh Burns determined he would go, and he started off, taking two days on the road. At every inn he came to the handsome young poet was recognized and honoured. The country people flocked to see him, and he heard his songs repeated on every side. Happy and uplifted, he reached the city and went to the house of one of his humble friends from Ayrshire who had settled in Edinburgh; but soon the news of his arrival spread, and everyone was anxious to see him. He became the lion of the season. Great ladies invited him to their houses and declared that his conversation “took them off their feet.” Great scholars talked to him as if they counted his notice an honour. It was the triumphal hour of the poet’s life; yet he remained quiet and dignified and never pretended to be other than the Scottish peasant that he was. He came into fine drawing-rooms dressed in a suit of blue and buff, with buckskins and top boots, in which he looked like a farmer in his Sunday best. Walter Scott, who was then a boy of fifteen, saw Burns at the house of the famous Professor Fergusson, and remembered the great occasion all his life.

The Kilmarnock edition of Burns’ poems brought him in twenty pounds; and a new edition, published in 1787, with the names of the most famous people in Scotland on its subscription list, gave him five hundred pounds. To an Ayrshire ploughman this was a fortune. Burns gave a hundred and eighty



pounds to his brother Gilbert, and with the rest of the money he bought and stocked the farm of Ellisland, near Dumfries. He married Jean Armour, one of his old loves, and settled down to what ought to have been the life of a prosperous farmer.

But old habits could not be easily conquered. Burns was still weak, and still loved pleasure, and after his triumphs at Edinburgh the work of the farm seemed duller and harder than before. There were always people ready to entice the witty, gifted young man, who made such an entertaining companion, away from his duties on the farm to join in a merry-making or a drinking bout. The farm-hands did not work while the master was away; the farm fell into disorder, and there was no money to buy food and clothes for poor Jean and her children. Burns' Edinburgh friends had obtained for him an appointment as an excise officer, and the salary that came from this was almost all the family had to depend on; and when the expenses of the drinkings and merrymakings had been paid there was not much left to spend on wife and children.

Yet there were many times when the old visions came back, and Robert Burns was no longer the drunken reveller, but became once more the inspired poet. The well-known *John Anderson, my Jo*, *John* and *Auld Lang Syne* were written at Ellisland, and so was *The Silver Tassie* and *The Banks o' Doon*, as well as the longer work *Tam o' Shanter*. The rollicking drinking-song,

O Willie brewed a peck o' maut,  
And Rob and Allan cam to pree;<sup>1</sup>  
Three blyther hearts, that lee-lang night,  
Ye wad na find in Christendie,

celebrated a merry meeting between Burns and his two friends Allan Masterton and William Nicoll.

In 1791 Burns sold his farm and moved with his family to Dumfries. For the next five years he went steadily downward, though there still came the wonderful moments when he produced such lyrics as *Ae Fond Kiss*, *O wert thou in the Cauld Blast*, *She is a Winsome Wee Thing*, *Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled*, and

<sup>1</sup> taste.



*My Luve is like a Red, Red Rose.* Toward the end of 1795 Robert Burns' health began to fail. Hard drinking and constant excitement had brought their natural results, and when, in January 1796, after a long carouse, he fell asleep in the open air on a bitter winter's night, he was not strong enough to bear the exposure. Rheumatic fever set in, and after an illness of some months he died on July 21, 1796.

In his own way Robert Burns, weak and faulty as he was, did as much to help the men and women of his time as did William Cowper or Crabbe. He sang to them songs such as that generation had never heard before, reminding them that there was still joy and beauty in the world, and simple, kindly people who lived happily without riches. He not only described the beauties of the country, but showed something of how it affected man's spirit; how sometimes there comes a sudden, unexpected flash of understanding and delight when one looks with loving eyes on some homely scene or object of the countryside. But he could interpret nature only by fits and starts, not with satisfying fullness; he could not show men the peace that she can give, for he never found it himself. There was another poet coming who was to do these things, and to crown the work that his forerunners had begun.

#### IV. WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, THE TEACHER

In the year 1783 there died at Cockermouth, in Cumberland, a certain attorney whose name was John Wordsworth. He left behind him five children—Richard, William, Dorothy, John, and Christopher, the eldest of them fifteen years old. Their mother had died five years before, so John, Christopher, and Dorothy went to live with their grandparents at Penrith, and William went back to Hawkshead Grammar School, which he had entered when he was eight years old, and spent his holidays with the others. It was not a happy home for the children, for the grandparents were harsh and unloving. "Many a time have William, John, Christopher, and myself



shed tears together of the bitterest sorrow," wrote affectionate, high-spirited little Dorothy. She looked forward always to the time when she should leave her grandparents' gloomy home, and live with her brother William, whom she adored.

William hated holidays, but was quite happy at school. He was a big-boned, homely featured youth, very much like the other Cumberland lads, quiet and reserved, and loving solitary walks, though he joined with zest in the sports of the others and his schoolfellows liked him well. The boys of Hawkshead School were boarded in the small cottages scattered through the dale, and each cottage was looked after by a country-woman, whom her charges called their "Dame." They had the same simple food as the dalesmen, and led the same hardy life. William Wordsworth has told us all about it in the poem he wrote some years later, and which he called *The Prelude*:

Ye lowly cottages wherein we dwell,  
A ministration of your own was yours;  
Can I forget you, being as you were  
So beautiful among the pleasant fields  
In which ye stood? or can I here forget  
The plain and seemly countenance with which  
Ye dealt out our plain comforts?

"We were a noisy crew," he says, and goes on to tell of all their sport during the different seasons of the year. They went bird-nesting, climbing the great crags, and supporting themselves by knots of grass as they hung perilously over the ravens' nests. They bathed in the streams and fished in the pools, and flew their kites from the hilltops on sunny afternoons. In summer-time they rowed and raced on Lake Windermere, and when the golden evenings came prolonged their games with bat and ball until the rest of the village was in bed. In winter they skated on the frozen lake, and, coming home through the cold and darkness, they ate their frugal supper with vigorous appetite; then, sitting round the warm peat fire, or at the plain deal table, they played at noughts and crosses, or dealt the cards for loo and whist.

They were a happy company, but young William Words-



worth loved sometimes to steal away from them and wander by himself among the valleys and the hills. There, he says,

the earth  
And common face of Nature spake to me  
Rememberable things . . .

and

led me to the love  
Of rivers, woods and fields. . . .  
Daily the common range of visible things  
Grew dear to me; already I began  
To love the sun. . . .  
I had seen him lay  
His beauty on the morning hills, had seen  
The western mountains touch his setting orb. . . .  
The moon to me was dear,  
For I could dream away my purposes,  
Standing to gaze upon her while she hung  
Midway between the hills, as if she knew  
No other region, but belonged to thee,  
Yea, appertained by a peculiar right  
To thee and thy grey huts, thou one dear Vale!

So Wordsworth learned to know and love the beautiful things he saw around him, as Thomson and Cowper and Crabbe and Burns had loved them; but soon he passed, boy as he was, to a fuller and deeper love than they had ever felt. He came to see the flowers and the trees and the skies and the mountains as the lovely body belonging to the great soul of nature. It is this that makes Wordsworth's poetry different from that of the other nature poets. He describes a flower or a sunrise as lovingly and as minutely as they do, but he sees behind the beauty something which is as truly spiritual as the soul of man himself.

To every natural form, rock, fruits, or flower,  
Even the loose stones that cover the highway,  
I gave a moral life.

All this sounds to you, perhaps, very high-flown and uninteresting, but we cannot understand Wordsworth or his poetry unless we try to see what was so very clear to him. We can perhaps illustrate this quite simply by comparing the verses he wrote on a daisy to the verses on the same flower written by Robert Burns.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See p. 424.



Wordsworth wrote four poems about the daisy, and all of them, like the poem of Burns, are in the form of a direct address to the flower.

Daisy ! again I talk to thee,  
For thou art worthy,

he says. He sits "on the dappled turf at ease," and looks at the flower:

And many a fond and idle name,  
I give to thee, for praise or blame,  
As is the humour of the game,  
While I am gazing.

Then he goes on with all sorts of pretty fancies about the flower; it is

A nun demure of lowly port;  
Or sprightly maiden, of Love's court, . . .  
A queen in crown of rubies drest;  
A starveling in a scanty vest;  
.  
A little cyclops, with one eye  
Staring to threaten and defy, . . .  
A silver shield with boss of gold,  
That spreads itself, some faery bold  
In fight to cover!

Yet, after all, "Flower" he thinks is the best name for this

Sweet silent creature!  
That breath'st with me in sun and air,  
Do thou, as thou art wont, repair  
My heart with gladness, and a share  
Of thy meek nature!

Thus he talks to the flower as if it were a living creature, with spiritual qualities of its own, by means of which it could help man.

Methinks that there abides in thee  
Some concord with humanity.

Thou wander'st the whole world about,  
Unchecked by pride or scrupulous doubt,  
With friends to greet thee, or without,  
Yet pleased and willing;  
Meek, yielding to the occasion's call,  
And all things suffering from all  
Thy function apostolical  
In peace fulfilling.

"I, at this time," he says,



Saw blessings spread around me like a sea.  
Thus while the days flew on, and years passed on,  
From Nature and her overflowing soul  
I had received so much, that all my thoughts  
Were steeped in feeling.

So he reached his seventeenth year, and it was time for him to leave school. The little money that his father had left his children was spent, but two of his uncles agreed to pay his expenses at Cambridge University, and in 1787 he went up to St John's College.

I roamed  
Delighted through the motley spectacle:  
Gowns grave or gaudy, doctors, students, streets,  
Courts, cloisters, flocks of churches, gateways, towers;  
Migration strange for a stripling of the hills,  
A northern villager.

His room, he says, was in

a nook obscure ;  
Right underneath, the College kitchens made  
A humming sound, less tuneable than bees,  
But hardly less industrious; with shrill notes  
Of sharp command and scolding intermixed. . . .  
And from my pillow, looking forth by light  
Of moon or favouring stars, I could behold  
The antechapel, where the statue stood  
Of Newton with his prism and silent face,  
The marble index of a mind for ever  
Voyaging through strange seas of Thought alone.

For a time he was taken up with the pleasant college life:

Companionships,  
Friendships, acquaintances, were welcome all.  
We sauntered, played, or rioted; we talked  
Unprofitable talk at morning hours;  
Drifted about along the streets and walks,  
Read lazily in trivial books, went forth  
To gallop through the country in blind zeal  
Of senseless horsemanship, or on the breast  
Of Cam sailed boisterously, and let the stars  
Come forth perhaps without one quiet thought.

Even then he loved best the walks he took by himself among the "level fields" round about the city:

I had a world about me—'twas my own;  
I made it, for it only lived to me  
And to the God who sees into the heart.



But soon he grew tired of this thoughtless life, and withdrew himself more and more from his companions. He studied hard, but rather to please himself than to prepare for his examinations. Often his conscience made him unhappy because he was not doing what his uncles had sent him to the university to do. He ought to have been training himself for some calling in life by which he could earn his living, but he could not think of any profession or trade he would like to follow. He could not bear to give up his happy, dreaming life, with his books, his long, solitary walks, his blissful communing with that spirit of nature that he had first known among the Westmorland mountains.

He went back to those mountains in the summer vacations, and was as happy with them as he had been in his boyhood. Each time he went he felt himself more strongly drawn to the sturdy folk among the dales, who lived poorly and loved simple pleasures, and had a natural piety that taught them to reverence all holy things. It seemed to him that they were nearer to nature than any of the other people he had met.

During one of these vacations there came to him

a joy  
Above all joys, that seemed another morn  
Risen on mid-noon.

This was when his "sole sister," Dorothy, whom he so dearly loved, joined him and they wandered about the beautiful country happily together. They talked of the home they two would make when William's college days were over; they talked, too, of what was going on in France—how the people had risen and thrown off their oppressors, and how a glorious age, when all men should be brothers, was surely coming in that country.

All over England people were talking of this same thing. Some thought that the French Revolution was the greatest and most wonderful event that had ever happened, and believed that it was the beginning of a great new age for the whole world. Others looked upon it with horror, and waited in



dread for the ruin they felt sure it would bring. During this summer of 1789, which William and Dorothy Wordsworth spent together, news of startling happenings came from France. In July the Bastille, the great Paris prison, was stormed, and the prisoners set free; the National Guard was formed, and a Revolutionary Assembly governed Paris. In October the King was brought from his palace at Versailles to Paris, a wildly excited mob following, and he was really, although not in name, a prisoner. The country was in the hands of the people.

To William Wordsworth all these things seemed very good. A glorious vision of a new world, where there should be no oppressors and all men should live as brothers, rose before him.

Oh! pleasant exercise of hope and joy! . . .  
Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,  
But to be young was very heaven! . . .  
Not favoured spots alone, but the whole earth,  
The beauty wore of promise, that which sets . . .  
The budding rose above the rose full blown.

In the summer vacation of 1790 Wordsworth and a college friend set out for a walking tour in the Alps. They landed at Calais on the evening of the day when the federation of the French nation had been proclaimed, and found the whole town making festival. "We saw," says Wordsworth,

In a mean city, and among a few,  
How bright a face is worn when joy of one  
Is joy for tens of millions.

As they travelled southward they found

benevolence and blessedness

Spread like a fragrance everywhere, when Spring  
Hath left no corner of the land untouched.

At night the enraptured youths supped at an inn with a merry crowd, made up mostly of those who had been attending the great ceremony of the federation, and were returning to their country homes. After supper they danced round the board, and drank to the health of the new nation that had been formed out of the old. At dawn the two travellers were on



foot again, and walking through beautiful country, where everyone seemed to be rejoicing.

Day after day, up early and down late,  
From hill to vale we dropped, from vale to hill  
Mounted—from province on to province swept.

For fourteen weeks they travelled thus happily. The beauty of it all and the gay spirit that seemed spread through all these country districts enchanted them, and they came home believing more ardently than ever that the Revolution was to bring every good gift man could desire, not only to France, but to all the world.

Then came Cambridge once more, but only for a few months; and then William Wordsworth, having finished his education, must look round him for the means of making a living. But he was in no hurry to make a choice. He was not ambitious, and his tastes were simple; and he had a small sum of money, enough to supply his wants for a year or two. He stayed for a short time in London, visited its great buildings, and walked, delighted and amazed, among the crowds that hurried through its streets. He went to the Houses of Parliament, and heard Burke, "old but vigorous in age," thunder out his denunciations against the French Revolution. For some months he led this happy, care-free life, and learned to love the great city; but the visions that his visit to France had given him were still before his eyes, and soon he felt that he must go back to the country that seemed to him to be the one that promised most happiness to its people.

He went in November 1791, and this time he stayed for nearly two years. His hopes rose higher and higher, as from the pleasant town on the Loire where he stayed he watched France forming itself, as he thought, into a great brotherhood. He made friends with an officer in the Revolutionary Army, Captain Michel Beaupuy, ardent, generous, and brave, and took from him his idea of the republic that the soldiers were to form; at one time he even thought of becoming a soldier himself. Wordsworth was a sturdy North-Countryman, and acts of



violence did not shock him so long as he believed them to be necessary in bringing about great and beneficial changes. When France declared war against Italy he ardently took her side, and when England joined herself to France's enemies he almost despaired of his own country. Even the September Massacres of 1792 and the murder of the French King and Queen in 1793 could not destroy his faith that good would come out of this present evil. But when, after his return home, the guillotine was set up in the Place Vendôme, and day by day the people flocked to see the executions, as to a show; when he saw France, who had done such terrible things to gain, as she said, her own freedom, trying to tyrannize over other nations—then he lost heart. His bright visions faded very slowly, but they did fade, and henceforward he turned more and more eagerly to the old beliefs and the old ways that generations of our forefathers have built up for us.

His dream of a sudden, wonderful rebirth of the world was over, and though his faith in God and nature and in the goodness of simple men remained, he was, as it was natural he should be, dejected and depressed. Then it was that his sister Dorothy came to his help. She cheered and comforted him, and brought him back to his true self.

She whispered still that brightness would return,  
She, in the midst of all, preserved me still,  
A Poet, made me seek beneath that name,  
And that alone, my office upon earth.

So Wordsworth's career was decided; he was to be a poet, dedicated to that high office with solemn ardour; and to that dedication he remained faithful all through his long life.

A college friend, who believed that Wordsworth had genius and wished to give him leisure and freedom from care that he might write his poems in peace, left him at about this time nine hundred pounds. With this sum he bought an annuity, and he and his sister resolved to make the small income that this provided sufficient for their wants. In the autumn of 1795 they settled at Racedown, in Dorsetshire, and began the long



comradeship which was such a delight to them both. Dorothy was, in feeling, as much a poet as William, though she could not put her thoughts into verse. She loved the woods and the mountains and the streams as dearly as did her brother, and she felt, as he did, a guiding, strengthening spirit in nature—a spirit that came from God. Wordsworth tells in several of his poems how much he owed to her. She managed his home for him, undertaking the household duties that he found harsh and distasteful, planning how to make the best of their tiny income, shielding him as far as she could from all worldly cares that he might have leisure and peace to do his best work.

His best work was nearly all done in the ten years that followed. In 1798 he, with Samuel Taylor Coleridge (of whom we shall speak in the next section), published the *Lyrical Ballads*, a collection of twenty-three poems, four by Coleridge and nineteen by Wordsworth. Nearly all those written by Wordsworth were on simple, homely subjects, written in a simple style, without any brilliance of ornament. No one took much notice of the poems, and those who did laughed at them. "Innocent and pretty infantile prattle," one reviewer called *We are Seven*. But Wordsworth went quietly on his way and took little heed of what was said of him. Very soon after the *Lyrical Ballads* was published Wordsworth and his sister went to Germany, where they stayed for five months; and when they came back they settled down in their beloved Lake Country, in a cottage in Grasmere. In the Lake Country they lived for the rest of their lives. For many years Wordsworth's poetry had only a small body of admirers. Most people laughed at it, and treated it with scorn. But gradually it won its way, and people recognized in Wordsworth a great, inspired teacher. "Every great poet is a teacher," he said. "I wish to be considered as a teacher or nothing." And a teacher he was. His own firm belief that God reveals Himself to His people through the beautiful objects that He has made can be seen in almost every one of his poems, even where it is not openly expressed. Take the beautiful poem on the daffodils:



I wandered lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host, of golden daffodils;  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine  
And twinkle on the milky way,  
They stretched in never-ending line  
Along the margin of the bay;  
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,  
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they  
Outdid the sparkling waves in glee;  
A poet could not but be gay,  
In such a jocund company;  
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought  
What wealth the show to me had brought.

For oft, when on my couch I lie  
In vacant or in pensive mood,  
They flash upon that inward eye  
That is the bliss of solitude;  
And then my heart with pleasure fills  
And dances with the daffodils.

In 1802 Wordsworth married Mary Hutchinson, whom he celebrated in the beautiful poem beginning "She was a Phantom of delight." Dorothy remained with them, dearly loved by both. Children were born to them, and the quiet, frugal, happy life went on in the remote and lovely valley among the lakes and the mountains. A few miles away, at Keswick, lived the poet Southey and his family and the family of Coleridge, who was himself a wanderer, though sometimes he came to join the company. Wordsworth never became a popular poet, though there were many who revered and loved him. In 1843 he succeeded his friend Southey as Poet Laureate. Sometimes he visited London, but most of his time was spent in his native Lake Country, and there, in 1850, at the age of eighty, he died.



## V. COLERIDGE AND SOUTHEY

Within the memory of your fathers and mothers, though not within yours, there stood in Newgate Street a fine old building, part of which dated from the days of Charles II. Passers-by often stopped for a few minutes to look through the tall iron gates into the open space in front of this building, and watch the groups of bareheaded boys, in long blue coats and bright yellow stockings, who were at play there. For this was Christ's Hospital, the famous "Bluecoat" School, where many noted Englishmen had been educated—among them two of the greatest writers of the period we are now considering, as well as several lesser ones.

If we could have visited Christ's Hospital any time between the years 1784 and 1790 we might have seen a tall boy, with long black hair and a pale, full face, standing somewhere in the cloisters, and talking eagerly and impressively to a little group of schoolfellows who had gathered round him. If we had drawn near to listen we should have been astounded to find that he was discoursing on some such subject as "Free Will," or "Pure Reason," or "Ideas of the Sublime," or reciting Homer or Pindar in Greek. We should have been still more astounded if we had heard him go on and on, never pausing for a word, rolling out high-sounding sentences and beautiful imagery with such marvellous eloquence that, though they cared little for the subject of his discourse, and understood probably less than half of it, his comrades listened spellbound. No wonder that one of them spoke of him later as "the inspired charity boy."

This strange, precocious, gifted youth was Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the son of the Vicar of Ottery St Mary, in Devonshire. He came to Christ's Hospital in 1782, when he was nine years old. He was the youngest of a family of thirteen, but he had always been a solitary and unchildlike child. He says:

I never played except by myself, and then only acting over what I had been reading or fancying or half one and half the other; cutting



down weeds and nettles with a stick, as one of the Seven Champions of Christendom. Alas! I had all the simplicity, all the docility of the little child, but none of the child's habits. I never thought as a child, never had the language of a child.

At the school in Ottery St Mary he had been thought a prodigy, and when he came to Christ's Hospital he soon astonished everybody by his skill in verse-making and the interest he took in what his schoolfellows considered very queer and very dull subjects. He had a great love of talking on these subjects as long as anyone would listen to him, and he gained a great name among the boys for his eloquence as well as for his learning.

Coleridge went up to Cambridge University just as Wordsworth was leaving it, and there he quickly became as famous for his store of out-of-the-way knowledge and his wonderful, untiring tongue as he had been at school. His room became a meeting-place for undergraduates who loved good talk and discussion, and there were endless arguments on many subjects, and especially on the French Revolution and the ideas of equality and brotherhood that were in all men's minds at that time. He wrote verses, too, verses which were like his talk, eloquent, but with a touch of preaching in them. He was making a name for himself, and for a time everything went well.

Then, in December 1793, a most astonishing thing happened. Coleridge suddenly disappeared from the university, without leaving any message behind him. His friends knew that he was in debt, and they had heard something about a lady with whom he was in love and who did not return his affection; and it was supposed he had fled from these troubles. But nobody knew where he had gone until four months later, when it was discovered that a certain Silas Tomkyn Comberback, who had enlisted as a private in the Light Dragoons, was really Samuel Taylor Coleridge. His fellow-troopers, astounded, as everybody was, by the marvellous flow of language and the wonderful learning of their new comrade,



spread his fame through the regiment, the officers heard the tales, and so the secret came out. Coleridge's friends obtained his discharge, and the university, with a severe reprimand, received him back.

A few months later he paid a visit to Oxford, and there he met and made friends with a dark-eyed, strikingly handsome lad, an undergraduate of Balliol College. This was Robert Southey, the son of a Bristol linen-draper. While Coleridge had been wearing the blue gown and yellow stockings of the fine old foundation in Newgate Street, Southey had been among the more select company of short-jacketed youths at the still older school at Westminster. He was a brilliant scholar and the pride of his masters, but he had taken up, in his generous, headstrong way, all the wild, revolutionary ideas of the time, and he was inclined to look upon all authority, even the authority of a schoolmaster, as unjust and oppressive. He held that flogging was a punishment to which no freeborn English boy should submit, and, with a few schoolfellows as rebellious as himself, he brought out a school magazine called *The Flagellant*, in which he expressed his views on the subject with great force and freedom. As the headmaster of Westminster was in the habit of using the rod with considerable vigour Southey's writings gave deep offence and he was expelled.

Nothing daunted, he went up to Oxford still brimming over with zeal for liberty and equality and all the other glorious things the Revolutionists promised, and with all sorts of wonderful schemes in his head. So eager was he that he scarcely attempted any of the reading necessary for his degree, but spent his time writing revolutionary poems, and trying to make converts to his doctrines. One meeting with Coleridge was enough. The Cambridge youth caught fire from the other's enthusiasm and took up his plans wholeheartedly. Southey explained his scheme of Pantisocracy, which meant the setting-up of a sort of socialist republic in which all should work with their hands for their daily bread, and have all things



in common. There was no chance, he said, of establishing such a republic in Europe, so he proposed that a chosen company, including himself and Coleridge, should go out to America and settle on the banks of the Susquehanna river. But it was necessary that the settlers should have wives to take their part in the work. Southey himself was engaged to a Miss Edith Fricker of Bristol, and another of the Pantisocrats, Robert Lovell, was to marry her sister. There was a third sister, whom he suggested as a suitable wife for Coleridge.

Coleridge accepted it all, and went back to Cambridge with his head full of new visions. "Since I quitted this room," he wrote when he returned, "how great and how important events have been evolved! America! Southey! Miss Fricker! Yes, Southey, you are right. Even love is the creature of strong motive. I certainly love her."

Southey and Coleridge both left their universities in 1794 without taking a degree. They met in Bristol, and the two marriages they had planned took place, but the republic on the banks of the Susquehanna was never established. Not one of the small band that had accepted Pantisocracy had any money, and without money nothing could be done. So Coleridge accepted the offer of a Bristol bookseller to publish some of his poems; and Southey—whose ardour for revolution had cooled a little, just as Wordsworth's had cooled, through the horrors that had taken place in France—sailed away to Portugal, where his uncle, who was a chaplain at Lisbon, had offered him employment.

Coleridge and his wife settled down in a cottage at Clevedon, in the midst of the most beautiful country and within sound of the sea. There was about an acre and a half of ground attached to the cottage, and Coleridge's plan was that he should cultivate this and that he and his wife should live on the produce. They were to have no servant and were to live very simply and industriously. For three months everything went well and they were very happy; then money began to



fail, and Coleridge was obliged to try to gain a living by writing. He wrote many poems, which he collected and published in 1797. He planned to publish a paper called *The Watchman*, and tried to get subscribers, but with poor results. Only ten numbers were issued, and of those not enough copies were sold to pay expenses.

At this time of need Mr Thomas Poole, the owner of a tanyard at Nether Stowey, in Somersetshire, came to his assistance. All through his life Coleridge found loyal friends and admirers to help him to do what he never learned to do for himself—provide the means of living for his family. Thomas Poole was one of the most devoted of these friends. He offered the Coleridges a cottage at Nether Stowey, and they removed there in 1797, and he gave them help in money and in other ways. At Nether Stowey Coleridge heard that Wordsworth was settled at Racedown, in Dorsetshire. He had read some of Wordsworth's early poems and had delighted in them, and now he felt that he must see the poet, in whom, he felt sure, he should find a true poetic brother. So he set off, walking by way of Bridgwater, to Racedown, and there he soon formed a close friendship with Wordsworth and his "exquisite sister," as he called her. Dorothy wrote in her journal:

He is a wonderful man, his conversation teems with soul, mind, and spirit. Then he is so benevolent, so good-tempered and cheerful, and, like William, interests himself so much about every little trifle. At first I thought him very plain, that is for about three minutes; he is pale, thin, has a wide mouth, thick lips, and not very good teeth, longish, loose-growing, half-curling rough black hair. But if you hear him speak for five minutes you think no more of them.

Coleridge was clearly at his best with these new friends; and the friendship grew so close that the Wordsworths removed from Racedown and came to live at Alfoxden, near Nether Stowey. For twelve months the two families lived in close companionship, and it was during this time that most of Coleridge's great poetry was written. The influence of Wordsworth and his sister roused and strengthened him, and helped



him to conquer for a time the weakness of will which later worked so much evil.

It has been told how he joined with Wordsworth in writing the *Lyrical Ballads*. In this volume appeared that strange, wild, lovely poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, so unlike anything that anyone else has ever written. From its very first verse

It is an ancient Mariner,  
And he stoppeth one of three.  
"By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,  
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?"

the reader is as unable to turn away and leave the story unfinished as was the Wedding-guest himself. He hears how the ship set sail and went on merrily until the storm-blast came and drove her before it:

The ship drove fast, loud roar'd the blast,  
And southward aye we fled.

And now there came both mist and snow,  
And it grew wondrous cold,  
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,  
As green as emerald.

And through the drifts the snowy clifts  
Did send a dismal sheen;  
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—  
The ice was all between.

The ice was here, the ice was there,  
The ice was all around:  
It crack'd and growl'd, and roar'd and howl'd,  
Like noises in a swound!

Then, in the midst of the crew's despair, came an albatross, that bird of good omen:

The ice did split with a thunder-fit;  
The helmsman steered us through!  
And a good south wind sprung up behind;  
The Albatross did follow,  
And every day, for food or play,  
Came to the mariners' hollo!

Then came this ancient mariner's sin. In wanton cruelty he shot the albatross; and the ship's good fortune went with it. His comrades reproached him.



## THE GOLDEN ROAD IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

---

For all averr'd, I had kill'd the bird  
That made the breeze to blow.  
Ah, wretch! said they, the bird to slay,  
That made the breeze to blow!

The rest of the poem tells of the fearful punishment that came to all in the ship. It is a powerful and a ghastly story, yet here and there come quiet, lovely verses such as these:

Sometimes a-dropping from the sky  
I heard the sky-lark sing;  
Sometimes all little birds that are,  
How they seem'd to fill the sea and air  
With their sweet jargoning!

And now 'twas like all instruments,  
Now like a lonely flute;  
And now it is an angel's song,  
That makes the heavens be mute.

It ceased: yet still the sails made on  
A pleasant noise till noon,  
A noise like of a hidden brook  
In the leafy month of June,  
That to the sleeping woods all night  
Singeth a quiet tune.

At the end come those verses which we all know so well:

Farewell, farewell! but this I tell  
To thee, thou Wedding-guest!  
He prayeth well who loveth well  
Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best, who loveth best  
All things both great and small;  
For the dear God who loveth us,  
He made and loveth all.

After the *Lyrical Ballads* was published Coleridge started with the Wordsworths on their tour to Germany. He went with them as far as Hamburg, then left them, and went on to Göttingen University, where he stayed for five months. There was a colony of English students at Göttingen, and among them Coleridge quickly became famous. Like everyone else who knew him, they were amazed at his eloquence and his learning. "It is very delightful," wrote one of the students, "to hear him sometimes discourse on religious topics for an



hour together." He had begun a new poem almost immediately after *The Ancient Mariner* was finished—a mystic poem, filled with a strange, haunting music and called *Christabel*.

'Tis the middle of night by the castle clock,  
And the owls have awaken'd the crowing cock,  
Tu-whit!—Tu-whoo!  
And hark, again! the crowing cock,  
How drowsily it crew.

Is the night chilly and dark?  
The night is chilly, but not dark.  
The thin grey cloud is spread on high,  
It covers but not hides the sky.  
The moon is behind, and at the full;  
And yet she looks both small and dull.  
The night is chill, the cloud is gray:  
'Tis a month before the month of May,  
And the Spring comes slowly up this way.

The lovely lady Christabel,  
Whom her father loves so well,  
What makes her in the wood so late,  
A furlong from the castle gate?  
She had dreams all yesternight  
Of her own betrothed knight;  
Dreams that made her moan and leap  
As on her bed she lay in sleep;  
And she in the midnight wood will pray  
For the weal of her lover that's far away.

She stole along, she nothing spoke,  
The sighs she heaved were soft and low,  
And naught was green upon the oak  
But moss and rarest mistletoe;  
She kneels beneath the huge oak-tree,  
And in silence prayeth she.

He recited the first part of this poem—all he had written—to the Göttingen students. Afterward he added a few more stanzas, then put the poem aside and never finished it. We think that at this time he had begun to take small doses of opium, and that his will was weakening under the influence of the drug, though no serious results were seen until some years afterward.

Coleridge came back to England in 1797, and in 1800 he



moved with his family to the Lake District, that he might be near his dearly loved friends the Wordsworths. He took a large house called Greta Hall, standing on a little hill near the river Greta. All around it lay the mountains, rising to the great masses of Skiddaw and Helvellyn; two lovely lakes, Derwentwater and Bassenthwaite, could be seen from its windows. There were deep valleys and wooded slopes round about, and there was the little town of Keswick a few miles away.

His marriage was not a very happy one—it was scarcely likely that a marriage so curiously brought about would be. He was taking more and more opium, and he grew less and less capable of work, and more and more dreamy and disregardful of the ordinary everyday duties of life. He wandered about the country, and very often travelled the thirteen miles that lay between Greta Hall and the Grasmere cottage to spend a few days with the Wordsworths. Mrs Coleridge and her children were left to do the best they could in the big, lonely house, where there was very little money and many cares. They had great need of a friend; and, happily, they soon found one.

The six years between 1798 and 1804, which had been spent by Wordsworth in peaceful and happy industry, and by Coleridge in a slow falling away from the great height he had reached at their beginning, had been years of struggle for Robert Southey. He had stayed in Portugal for a year, and then had come back to England, eager to make a home for his wife and his little daughter. He had tried the law, but without success. Then he had gone back to Lisbon, taking his wife with him; and, finding no opening there, he had come home once more and set himself sternly to work to make a living by literature. He wrote for the newspapers and magazines, doing any job that came in his way, however dull or distasteful it might be. He and his wife were very poor, but they were very happy. His courage was high, and he was as ardent and enthusiastic as ever in the causes he had at heart;



but, like Wordsworth, he had seen with dismay the course things were taking in France, and had turned back to the old-established order of things as the best foundation for his hopes and his schemes for the country's welfare. Moreover, since he had now a family to support, he must occupy himself with practical work, not with wild visions. After a time a certain amount of success came to him. His work was bringing him a moderate income and some fame. He wrote some of his best short poems at this time—*The Holly-tree*, *Bishop Hatto*, *The Battle of Blenheim*, *The Well of St Keyne*, *The Inchcape Rock*, and an Eastern story in verse, called *Thalaba*.

In 1803 he decided to settle in the Lake District, that he might be near Coleridge, and that his wife might be near her sister. They came to live at Greta Hall, which was big enough to take the two families; and when, a year later, Coleridge went off on a journey to Malta, Southey became the head of the household. Soon the third of the three sisters, who had married the young poet Robert Lovell, and was now a widow, came with her little son to join the party. There was little money for the expenses of the household, except what was provided by Southey. Coleridge had made over a small annuity of seventy-five pounds—allowed him by Josiah Wedgwood, the rich pottery proprietor—for the support of his wife and his three children. Mrs Lovell had nothing.

Cheerfully and without complaint Southey took up the burden. It meant that he must work hard and live frugally; worse, it meant that he must give most of his time to work that would bring a sure and quick return in money, and must put aside the greater and more cherished schemes that he had hoped would bring him fame. By strict method and the careful portioning out of his time he managed to fit in all his duties: to give so many hours to bread-winning, and a few—a very few—to the great works of which he dreamed, so many to happy family life, and so many to the kindly hospitality he never grudged his friends. There was little time left for his own personal pleasures, but he did not mind that; if



he took a walk, it was with a book in his hand to help his busy brain to prepare an article or a review, which would be written down when he got home, and bring in another guinea toward the expenses of his household. The only indulgence he allowed himself was his books. Gradually he got together a fine collection—most of the books being those he needed for his work—and lodged it in a large, pleasant room, with wide windows looking far out over the mountains. Here he worked, and here the household gathered at times of merrymaking. Those who had known the restless, rebellious Robert Southey of school and college days could never have dreamed that he would become this nobly serious man, of high purpose and serene courage, who lived for nearly forty years a life of incessant, self-sacrificing toil. Yet the old enthusiasms were still there, the old fervent love of England, the old generous readiness to champion a righteous cause. Some of his finest work was inspired by these enthusiasms. Critics have said that his *Ode written during the Negotiations for Peace in 1814* is the grandest and most powerful poem of its kind since Milton wrote his immortal sonnet *Avenge, O Lord, Thy Slaughtered Saints*. Labour and disappointment never soured him. He would come out of his study, where he had been toiling for many hours, and join the group gathered round the fire or in the sunny garden; and eager voices would welcome him, and there would be laughter and merry chatter round about his chair. He could talk nonsense as admirably as he could talk sense, and he delighted his young sons and daughters and niece and nephews with the verses he made up to celebrate different domestic events.

During these years Southey wrote poems, histories, biographies, essays, pamphlets, and newspaper articles. The poems were chiefly long romantic narratives, in verse—*Madoc*, *The Curse of Kehama*, *Roderick, the Last of the Goths*—which were eagerly read at the time, but have not gained a place among the immortal poems of our language. They are really more like ordinary prose stories, though here and there come



passages of true poetic beauty. In *The Curse of Kehama* there is a description of how all the beasts of the forest loved the heavenly maid, Kailyal. The leopard came and

crouch'd before the heavenly maid,  
And offer'd to her touch his speckled side;  
Or, with arch'd back erect, and bending head,  
And eyes half-closed for pleasure, would he stand  
    Courting the pressure of her gentle hand.  
Trampling his path through wood and brake,  
And canes which crackling fall before his way,  
And tassel-grass, whose silvery feathers play,  
    O'ertopping the young trees,  
    On comes the Elephant, to slake  
His thirst at noon in yon pellucid springs.  
Lo! from his trunk upturn'd, aloft he flings  
    The grateful shower, and now  
    Plucking the broad-leaved bough  
Of yonder plane, with wavy motion slow,  
Fanning the languid air,  
    He moves it to and fro.  
But when that form of beauty meets his sight,  
The trunk its undulating motion stops,  
From his forgetful hold the plane-branch drops,  
Reverent he kneels and lifts his rational eyes  
    To her as if in prayer. . . .

She seem'd a thing  
Of heaven's prime uncorrupted work, a child  
    Of early nature undefiled,  
A daughter of the years of innocence,  
And therefore all things loved her. The mother bird  
    When Kailyal's step she heard,  
Sought not to tempt her from her secret nest,  
But hastening to the dear retreat would fly  
To meet and welcome her benignant eye.

The work by which Southey is best remembered now is his *Life of Nelson*, written in 1813, the year in which he was appointed Poet Laureate. It has taken its place as one of the best biographies in the English language. It is written in a clear and simple style, and is, as has been said, "for ever a record of heroism and patriotism in the past, and a stimulus to them in the future." Its closing paragraph might well be learned by heart by every English boy and girl:

He cannot be said to have fallen prematurely whose work was done; nor ought he to be lamented who died so full of honours,



and at the height of human fame. The most triumphant death is that of the martyr; the most awful that of the martyred patriot; the most splendid that of the hero in the hour of victory; and if the chariot and horses of fire had been vouchsafed for Nelson's translation he could scarcely have departed in a brighter blaze of glory. He has left us, not indeed his mantle of inspiration, but a name and an example which will continue to be our shield and our strength. Thus it is that the spirits of the great and the wise continue to live and act after them.

Coleridge came back to England in 1806, but he did not come back to Greta Hall, and, except for one or two short periods, he never lived in the Lake Country again. He lived mostly in London, writing by fits and starts, though he produced no more great poems, and giving courses of lectures which were afterward printed. Some of these lectures were full of fine thoughts and illuminating criticism, others were dull and of little value. He had never been able to cure himself of the habit of taking opium, and he had gradually increased the doses, until now he was taking such large quantities that his health was being very seriously injured. Southey and the Wordsworths and his other friends tried in every way they could to help him, but in vain. In 1816 he published the still unfinished *Christabel*, which astonished and delighted all true poetry lovers, and in the next year he followed it with a collection of his poems, including the strange *Kubla Khan*. Coleridge says that this poem came to him in a dream, and that when he awoke he wrote it down; but as he wrote the vision faded, and it never came to him again. So *Kubla Khan*, like *Christabel*, remained unfinished.

At length, in 1816, with ruined health and clouded brain, Coleridge consented to put himself under the care of a physician, Mr James Gillman. He went to live in Mr Gillman's house at Highgate, and there, devotedly tended by this good friend and his wife, he managed to free himself from the habit that had enslaved him for so long. Gradually his health improved, and he came back to his better self. He lived for another eighteen years, and wrote some of his finest critical



and philosophical works, but he made no more poetry. He died in 1834.

Southey lived until 1843. His closing years had none of the calm brightness that had shone upon those of his brilliant friend and brother-in-law, whom he had so lovingly admired and loyally served. He never recovered from the loss of his adored son Herbert, who died in 1816. His wife died in 1834. Southey lived on, sad and lonely, finding his only comfort in his books. He sat in his library, which had once been the happy meeting-place of a household that was now scattered, and very mournfully he wrote the fine stanzas that described the clouded evening which had followed his hard-working but happy day.

My days among the Dead are past;  
 Around me I behold,  
 Where'er these casual eyes are cast,  
 The mighty minds of old;  
 My never failing friends are they,  
 With whom I converse day by day.

With them I take delight in weal,  
 And seek relief in woe;  
 And while I understand and feel  
 How much to them I owe,  
 My cheeks have often been bedew'd  
 With tears of thoughtful gratitude.

My thoughts are with the Dead, with them  
 I live in long-past years,  
 Their virtues love, their faults condemn,  
 Partake their hopes and fears,  
 And from their lessons seek and find  
 Instruction with an humble mind.

My hopes are with the Dead, anon  
 My place with them will be,  
 And I with them shall travel on  
 Through all Futurity;  
 Yet leaving here a name, I trust,  
 That will not perish in the dust.



---

## Chapter XXX

### THE ROMANTIC WRITERS

#### I. THE ROMANCE OF MYSTERY AND TERROR

**T**HE three poets of whom we have been speaking—Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey—are the great poets of the Revolution period, and the story of their lives shows very clearly just how they were affected by the great upheaval that was going on in France. There were many other people in England who were affected very much in the same way. First came the wild, splendid visions, and the desire to uproot and destroy all existing things to make way for something better; then the gradual disappointment, as the new order of things turned out to be worse than the old; and at last the bitter certainty that out of this revolution no good would come, and the sad but hopeful search after some other way of making life beautiful and happy.

Some people turned to Wordsworth in their disappointment, and found comfort in his poems, and in trying, like him, to live simply and make nature their friend and guide. But it was only very slowly that Wordsworth's poems made their way. For years there were few who read them; most people wanted books of quite another kind. We will try now to see what kind of books they did want during these early years of the nineteenth century while the struggle with Napoleon was going on, and through the disturbed and restless years that followed the victory at Waterloo.

First, they wanted books on politics, for there were many who believed that by changes in the form of government man might be put in the way of finding his highest happiness. So, one after another, schemes for a perfect state were put forward, and each scheme found some to support and some to



oppose it. We cannot stay here to give any account of these books. There is only one of them—Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution*—that is of any general interest to-day. That, like all Burke's works, has some magnificent passages, and you will do well to read it when you are older.

There were other people who did not trouble themselves very much about politics, but who were strongly moved by the stir and excitement that the Revolution brought. Day by day came stories of dangers and horrors, of daring deeds and hair-breadth escapes, of death, sudden and violent, striking where it would. No one knew what a day might bring. The time came when Napoleon was planning to invade England, and so bring the terror nearer. Even to-day we are thrilled when we read the story of those eventful years. No wonder, then, that the men and women and boys and girls who lived through them were roused to a fever of excitement.

The old tales, *Pamela* and *Evelina* and *The Vicar of Wakefield*—even *Robinson Crusoe* and *Tom Jones*—fell flat on a mood like this. The novels of high-flown sentiment that had delighted Miss Lydia Languish were as tasteless as weak milk and water. Something stronger was wanted, and very soon it was found.

Even before the Revolutionary excitement had risen to any height there had been a few people in England who had discovered the thrill that comes with things strange and unusual. Horace Walpole, that very fashionable and modish gentleman, had found it in looking at ancient treasures and especially at buildings designed according to the Gothic style of architecture, which was then considered quite barbarous; and by Gothic architecture he had been inspired to write a Gothic romance. *The Castle of Otranto* was the first 'thriller' of the eighteenth century; a very mild thriller we should call it now, but there were readers of its own day who could not sleep at night for thinking about it. A few other writers had followed Horace Walpole with romances of the same kind; but the great age of the thriller, or 'horrid'<sup>1</sup> novel, as some of the

<sup>1</sup> 'horrid' then meant 'dreadful.'



people of that time called it, was the twenty years that followed the outbreak of the French Revolution.

The first and the most popular of the writers of these enthralling works was Mrs Ann Radcliffe, the daughter of a well-to-do London tradesman. She it was who discovered how to gather round her heroes and heroines all those things which suggest terror and mystery—gloomy castles, secret passages, uncanny lights, jangling chains, sliding panels, mysterious music, black veiled portraits. Her first book, called *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, published in 1794, had a remarkable success. She wrote several others, as strange and as exciting, and she set a fashion which other writers were quick to follow.

There was one very pleasing thing about Mrs Radcliffe's novels—they always had a happy ending. The next popular writer of 'horrid' romances—Matthew Gregory Lewis—would have none of such weakness. He was much more violent in his methods than was Mrs Radcliffe. His story *The Monk*, published in 1796, was full of murders and tortures and fiendish outrages of every description. There was a great outcry when it was published from people who found its horrors not exciting, but revolting; but there were other people who could read and enjoy it, and Lewis—henceforward called "Monk" Lewis—became a famous figure in society. He wrote later *Tales of Terror* and *Tales of Wonder*, which were in the same style as *The Monk*, though not quite as violent.

The taste for these lurid works spread like an epidemic even among people who might have been least expected to like them. Carefully brought up young ladies inquired eagerly at the circulating libraries for stories with such titles as *The Fatal Revenge*, *The Nocturnal Visit*, *The Necromancer of the Black Forest*, *The Mysterious Warnings*. They were eagerly read by staid business men and by fine ladies. Schoolboys doted upon them. For years the demand for such novels was kept up, and writers were found ready to supply them; but at last the taste for them wore itself out, because, as Sir Walter Scott said, the horrors became as monotonous and familiar as the events of everyday life.



If some of these novel-writers could have taken a lesson from Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* they might have produced something far better than the best of the works of Mrs Radcliffe. If we compare *The Ancient Mariner* with *The Mysteries of Udolpho* we can see the difference between the work of a genius and the work of a writer of talent. Southey's *Thalaba*, *The Curse of Kehama*, and *Roderick, the Last of the Goths*, are stories of the same kind, strange and exciting, but not horrible; and these lead us on to the works of Walter Scott.

## II. THE ROMANCE OF HISTORY

Walter Scott was born in the same year as William Wordsworth, and, like him, was a sturdy North-Countryman; but his home lay farther north, away over the Border, in Edinburgh. His father was what is called in Scotland a Writer to the Signet, which means a member of an ancient order of lawyers. He was an upright, honourable man, highly respected in the town, a little severe, and very strict in his notions as to the conduct and manners befitting a gentleman. His son, young Walter, was in some ways a trial to him. He could not understand the boy's love for strange, outlandish things and people. He did not see what pleasure was to be found in the long rambles over the country from which his son returned dusty and foot-sore, hungry and weary. Yet in these rambles young Walter delighted; and though he had been slightly lame since his babyhood he was none the less sturdy a walker. On every holiday he and a few other lads, whose tastes were the same as his own, would start out to explore the country round about Edinburgh. They would talk to the labourers working in the fields, the women at their cottage doors, the old folks sitting in the sun outside the village inns; and if one of these had an old song he could sing or an old tale he could tell, who so delighted as Walter Scott? Out would come pencil and notebook, and the delighted youth would write down the lines he had heard. When the country-



folk saw how interested he was in their ballads they would grow interested too, and someone would remember how an aunt or a grandmother would be sure to know the next verse, or that there was an old man living down the lane could sing a song that his father and his father's father had sung before him. Everybody was ready to talk to this bright-faced lad who was so friendly and so eager, and Walter Scott was happier in the company of these kindly country-folk than he would have been in the grandest society of Edinburgh.

On one of these rambles he and his friends found themselves thirty miles from Edinburgh, without a sixpence between them. "We were put to our shifts," said Walter Scott, "but we asked every now and then at a cottage door for a drink of water, and one or two of the good wives, observing our worn-out looks, brought forth milk in place of water, so that with that, and hips and haws, we were little the worse." When he reached home his father asked him how he managed to go so far with so little money. "Pretty much like the young ravens," answered Walter. "I only wished I had been as good a player on the flute as poor George Primrose in *The Vicar of Wakefield*. If I had his art I should like nothing better than to tramp like him from cottage to cottage all over the world." "I doubt," said his father, severely, "I greatly doubt, sir, you were born for nae better than a gangrel scrapegut"—which is to say, a wandering fiddler.

At this time Scott was a law-student in Edinburgh, and when he had passed the necessary examinations he became an advocate. Now that he was more his own master he spent all his holidays in the country expeditions that he loved, often going away for several weeks, walking through the most remote and primitive districts, in some of which a wheeled cart had never been seen. He visited every ruin, and every spot famous in history or tradition; one night he slept in a shepherd's hut, another in a clergyman's manse, a third in a farmer's homestead. He talked to everybody and made friends with everybody; all his days were happy, but the



happiest were those on which he discovered a ballad he had never heard before, and wrote it down in triumph. "Such an endless fund o' humour and drollery as he then had wi' him!" said Mr Shortreed, Sheriff of Roxburghshire, who acted as Scott's guide on some of these expeditions. "Never ten yards but we were either laughing or roaring and singing. Wherever we stopped, how brawlie he suited himsel' to everybody. He aye did as the lave<sup>1</sup> did; never made himsel' the great man, or took ony airs in the company."

Scott, like Wordsworth and Coleridge and Southey, grew up in the midst of the restlessness and discontent that were stirring all Europe to revolution, but he was not affected as they were. He never saw the fair visions of a new and better world that rose before their eyes. He saw only the disorder, the ruin, and the bloodshed, a Government overturned, a king and queen murdered, all the kindly, human affections outraged. He was by nature and training a staunch Tory, with an attachment to the Crown that could not be shaken. He hated the very name of revolution, and he was eager to save his own land from the horrors that had fallen on France. When, after Napoleon had climbed to power, an invasion of England was threatened, he helped to raise a band of volunteer soldiers, which was named the Edinburgh Light Horse, and in spite of his lameness he became one of the most active members of the troop. His was an eager, kindly, practical benevolence, that worked unceasingly to relieve misery and make those around him happy. In his student days he had been known as one who would always do a good turn, even to the merest acquaintance, no matter at what inconvenience to himself. But he felt little interest in vague, general schemes that were to bring happiness to all mankind, and the doctrine of liberty, equality, and fraternity, as the Revolutionists understood it, was hateful to him.

Time went on, and Scott was beginning to make a name for himself as an advocate of the Scottish Bar. He married and

<sup>1</sup> the rest.



settled in Edinburgh, with a cottage in a pretty village about six miles away in which to spend the summer holidays. In 1799 he was appointed Sheriff of Selkirkshire, which gave him a settled income of three hundred pounds. He was still going on collecting ballads, though after his marriage he left off his longer expeditions, and about the year 1800 he began to think of publishing them. He obtained the help of various friends, who became almost as enthusiastic over collecting ballads as he was himself; and he wrote several original ones, including the famous *Eve of St John*. The collection grew until it filled three volumes, instead of the one that Scott had expected it to fill. The first and second volumes were published in 1802, and in a letter he wrote that year to a friend he said, "In the third volume I intend to publish . . . a long poem of my own. It will be a kind of romance of Border chivalry in a light horseman sort of stanza."

The long poem grew to such a length that it could not be included in the third volume, but had to be published by itself. Scott began with the idea of writing a poem about Gilbert Horner, the goblin page, whose story was commonly told among the country-folk of the district. One night, it was said, some men returning to their homes heard a voice calling, "Tint, tint, tint" (which means "lost"). They called, and a misshapen child dwarf appeared. They took it with them, and for some time it lived in the village with them. Then one evening a voice was heard crying, "Gilbert Horner." The dwarf answered, "That is me, I must away," and disappeared, at the call, it was supposed, of the devil, to whom he belonged.

Someone told this story to the Duchess of Buccleuch, who was the wife of the head of the clan to which Scott was proud to belong. She insisted that Scott should make a ballad of it. "If she had asked me to write a ballad on a broomstick I must have attempted it," said Scott; and so he began. He wrote a few verses, then put them by, and for a long time wrote no more. Then some friends saw this beginning and praised it so much that he was persuaded to go on with it. "On I wrote,"



he says, "knowing no more than the man in the moon how I was to end." Very soon he forgot all about the goblin page and was writing a romantic story such as he loved. He was back in the fifteenth century, in the midst of Border warfare, and wild midnight rides, and wizards and minstrels and fair ladies, and warriors meeting in single combat to the sound of trumpets blown and the cry of "God defend the right!"

When Scott was fairly started he wrote very rapidly, at the rate of three cantos a week. Three years, however, passed before the poem was published, and then, in the first week of January 1805, it appeared, with the title *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*. It had at once a marvellous success. It was exactly the sort of poem to suit the taste of the time. Many people were beginning to take an interest in the country's history, partly through that love of the strange and the unusual that had made the 'horrid' novels so popular, and partly because the war had aroused their patriotism and turned their thoughts to the great events of the past. They found that a story founded on what had happened in their own country could be as romantic and as exciting as *Thalaba* or *Roderick*, and much more interesting. Thirty thousand copies of the poem were sold in a very short time, and all over the country people were quoting its most striking passages:

Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,  
Who never to himself hath said,  
This is my own, my native land!  
Whose heart hath ne'er within him burn'd,  
As home his footsteps he hath turn'd,  
From wandering on a foreign strand!  
If such there breathe, go, mark him well;  
For him no Minstrel raptures swell;  
High though his titles, proud his name,  
Boundless his wealth as wish can claim;  
Despite those titles, power, and pelf,  
The wretch, concentred all in self,  
Living shall forfeit fair renown,  
And, doubly dying, shall go down  
To the vile dust, from whence he sprung,  
Unwept, unhonour'd, and unsung,



and

If thou wouldst view fair Melrose aright,  
Go visit it by the pale moonlight;  
For the gay beams of lightsome day  
Gild, but to flout, the ruins grey;  
When the broken arches are black in night,  
And each shafted oriel glimmers white;  
When the cold light's uncertain shower  
Streams on the ruin'd central tower;  
When buttress and buttress, alternately,  
Seem framed of ebon and ivory;  
When silver edges the imagery,  
And the scrolls that teach thee to live and die;  
When distant Tweed is heard to rave,  
And the owlet to hoot o'er the dead man's grave,  
Then go—but go alone the while—  
Then view St David's ruin'd pile;  
And, home returning, soothly swear,  
Was never scene so sad and fair!

The success of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* caused Scott to decide that henceforward literature should be the chief business of his life. In 1804 he had removed to a larger house at Ashestiel, on the south bank of the Tweed, and here he began another long poem, which he called *Marmion*. It was published in 1808 and was even more successful than the *Lay*. Most of you, probably, have read it; for those who have not there is a great treat in store. It is a story such as young people love. "I am sensible," wrote Scott, at a later period of his life, "that if there be anything good about my poetry or prose either, it is a hurried frankness of composition which pleases soldiers, sailors, and young people of active dispositions." The thrill that Scott's poetry gives does not make one shiver and gasp as does the thrill of the Tale of Terror. It makes you lift up your head and brace your shoulders, and long to go out into a world where there are dangers to be met, and gallant deeds to be done.

*Marmion* is, as its sub-title tells us, "a story of Flodden Field." It is one of the many fine stories that have been told about the long struggle between England and Scotland, which has given us some of the most romantic pages of our history. There is a love-interest in it, but that does not count for much,



and the plot does not count for much either. The hero, Lord Marmion, is not one of the perfect knights that we meet in most romantic stories. He is proud and brave and patriotic, but he has a fierce temper and an overmastering ambition that leads him sometimes into dishonourable actions; and he is false to the lady of his love. There is some truth in Byron's malicious description of him, "not quite a felon, and but half a knight." Scott shows us all his faults and weaknesses, and makes us feel how great is the ruin when a noble nature falls so low.

The story tells how Marmion, having persuaded Constance de Beverley, a nun, to leave her convent for love of him and ride for three years as a horse-boy in his train, tires of her, and leaves her at the Abbey of Lindisfarne. He strictly commands that no injury shall be done to her, but the superiors of the convent, obeying the laws of their Church rather than the commands of this powerful favourite of the King, bring her to trial. In the course of her trial it transpires that she has forged papers for Marmion by means of which he has been able to bring a false accusation against Ralph de Wilton of being secretly concerned in Lambert Simnel's insurrection. Marmion wishes to marry Lady Clara de Clare, daughter and heiress of the Duke of Gloucester, who is betrothed to De Wilton, and the charge is brought in order to get De Wilton out of the way. Marmion and De Wilton meet in single combat, and De Wilton is overthrown and supposed to be dead, but he is secretly carried away and nursed back to health by his old servant, Austin; then, broken-hearted, he departs on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, in the dress of a palmer. Marmion asks Clara's hand in marriage and is refused, but King Henry VIII supports his suit, and gives him authority to withdraw Clara from the convent in which she has taken refuge. Just at this time there are disagreements between England and Scotland that seem likely to lead to war, and Henry VIII sends Marmion to James of Scotland to see if he can overcome the difficulties. James tells him that a letter



of defiance has already been sent to Henry, and offers him and his train lodgings in Tantallon Castle, the home of Archibald Douglas, Earl of Angus, until instructions as to what he shall do next are received from the English king.

Meantime De Wilton has returned to England, and by accident has met the Abbess of Whitby, who was present at the trial of Constance. Not knowing who he is, she tells him of the confession Constance made before being condemned to a cruel death, and De Wilton thus obtains proofs of his own innocence of the charge Marmion had brought against him. Marmion, armed with the King's authority, insists on taking Clara out of the charge of the Abbess, and brings her to Tantallon Castle, where De Wilton, in his palmer's dress, goes also.

Here the sixth and last canto, the finest of all, opens.

Clara is put in the charge of the pious Lady Angus, and spends much of her time walking on the lonely battlements, grieving over her lost lover; and there one evening De Wilton suddenly appears before her. He tells his story and reveals Marmion's treachery, then says that he has confided in Douglas, who believes his story and will that evening dub him knight for the second time, and after that he will go to join the English army under Lord Surrey, and take his old place once more. That night in the chapel of the castle a small group assembles—De Wilton, Douglas, Clara, a bishop, and two priests:

Then at the altar Wilton kneels,  
And Clare the spurs bound on his heels;  
And think what next he must have felt,  
At buckling of the falchion belt!  
And judge how Clara changed her hue,  
While fastening to her lover's side  
A friend, which, though in danger tried,  
He once had found untrue!  
Then Douglas struck him with his blade:  
"St Michael and St Andrew aid,  
I dub thee knight.  
Arise, Sir Ralph, De Wilton's heir!  
For King, for Church, for Lady fair,  
See that thou fight."



And Bishop Gawain as he rose,  
Said—"Wilton! grieve not for thy woes,  
Disgrace and trouble:  
For He Who honour best bestows,  
May give thee double."  
De Wilton sobb'd, for sob he must—  
"Where'er I meet a Douglas, trust  
That Douglas is my brother!"  
"Nay, nay," old Angus said, "not so;  
To Surrey's camp thou now must go,  
Thy wrongs no longer smother.  
I have two sons in yonder field;  
And if thou meet'st them under shield,  
Upon them bravely—do thy worst;  
And foul fall him that blanches first!"

Next morning Marmion with his train prepared to leave  
Tantallon:

The train from out the castle drew,  
But Marmion stopp'd to bid adieu:  
"Though something I might plain," he said,  
"Of cold respect to stranger guest,  
Sent hither by your King's behest,  
While in Tantallon's towers I staid;  
Part we in friendship from your land,  
And, noble Earl, receive my hand."  
But Douglas round him drew his cloak,  
Folded his arms, and thus he spoke:  
"My manors, halls, and bowers, shall still  
Be open, at my Sovereign's will,  
To each one whom he lists, howe'er  
Unmeet to be the owner's peer.  
My castles are my King's alone,  
From turret to foundation-stone—  
The hand of Douglas is his own;  
And never shall in friendly grasp  
The hand of such as Marmion clasp."

Burn'd Marmion's swarthy cheek like fire,  
And shook his very frame for ire,  
And—"This to me!" he said,—  
"An 'twere not for thy hoary beard  
Such hand as Marmion's had not spared  
To cleave the Douglas' head!  
And first I tell thee, haughty Peer,  
He who does England's message here,  
Although the meanest in her state,  
May well, proud Angus, be thy mate:  
And, Douglas, more I tell thee here,



Even in thy pitch of pride,  
 Here in thy hold, thy vassals near,  
 (Nay, never look upon your lord,  
 And lay your hands upon your sword,)  
 I tell thee, thou'rt defied;  
 And if thou said'st I am not peer  
 To any lord in Scotland here,  
 Lowland or Highland, far or near,  
 Lord Angus, thou hast lied! ”  
 On the Earl's cheek the flush of rage  
 O'ercame the ashen hue of age;  
 Fierce he broke forth,—“ And darest thou, then,  
 To beard the lion in his den,  
 The Douglas in his hall?  
 And hopest thou hence unscathed to go?  
 No, by Saint Bride of Bothwell, no!  
 Up drawbridge, grooms—what, Warder, ho!  
 Let the portcullis fall.”  
 Lord Marmion turn'd,—well was his need,  
 And dash'd the rowels in his steed,  
 Like arrow through the archway sprung,  
 The ponderous grate behind him rung;  
 To pass there was such scanty room,  
 The bars, descending, razed his plume.

All that day Marmion journeyed, and at night stopped at the convent of St Bernard, and next morning set off to join the English army. The Lady Clara was left on a hillock that overlooked the battlefield, with Marmion's two squires, Blount and Fitz-Eustace, and ten archers for her guard; and Marmion with the rest of his train joined in the fight. The battle is described as it was seen from this hillock. For a time it seemed that Scotland might be victorious, and Blount, seeing Lord Marmion's pennon wavering as if about to fall, could stand it no longer:

“ By Heaven, and all its saints! I swear  
 I will not see it lost!  
 Fitz-Eustace, you with Lady Clare  
 May bid your beads, and patter prayer,—  
 I gallop to the host.”  
 And to the fray he rode amain,  
 Follow'd by all the archer train.  
 The fiery youth with desperate charge,  
 Made, for a space, an opening large,—  
 The rescued banner rose,—  
 But darkly closed the war around,



Like pine-tree, rooted from the ground,  
 It sunk among the foes.  
 Then Eustace mounted too:—yet staid  
 As loath to leave the helpless maid  
 When, fast as shaft can fly,  
 Blood-shot his eyes, his nostrils spread,  
 The loose rein dangling from his head,  
 Housing and saddle bloody red,  
 Lord Marmion's steed rushed by;  
 And Eustace, maddening at the sight,  
 A look and sign to Clara cast  
 To mark he would return in haste,  
 Then plunged into the fight.

He and Blount did return before long, bearing their mortally wounded master in their arms. They took off his helmet, and he revived, and at once he commanded his two squires to return to the battle. So he and Clara were left alone, and Clara, forgetting her wrongs in her pity, brought him water from the spring, and with a monk who was ministering to those who had been wounded in the battle stayed with him until he died. So the story ends, with the Scottish defeat, and the marriage of De Wilton and Clara.

In Scott's own day and for several generations afterward, down to the days of your grandfathers and grandmothers, nearly everyone knew whole pages of *Marmion* by heart. It is easy to remember, with its quick, light rhythm. When once you get the tune started the words flow in almost of themselves. There is a tale told of an old gentleman who was going along a London street on a dark night, repeating softly to himself,

With dying hand, above his head  
 He shook the fragment of his blade,  
 And shouted, "Victory!  
 Charge, Chester, charge!"

when he heard another voice out of the darkness saying, "On, Stanley, on!" and saw that it came from another old gentleman who was approaching him. "Were the last words of *Marmion*," they finished, both together; then took off their hats to each other, and parted, laughing.

The publishers paid Scott a thousand pounds for *Marmion*,



and when, two years later, another long poem, *The Lady of the Lake*, was published, twenty thousand copies were sold in a little more than six months. Scott was beginning to grow rich. In 1811 he bought an estate of about a hundred acres in a lovely district on the banks of the Tweed, and began to build a house there, which he hoped might be a home for him and for his sons and grandsons after him. For a time everything went well. He was doing a great deal of other literary work, besides writing his poems, and everything he wrote was received with enthusiasm.

In 1812 Scott published two more poems, *Rokeby* and *The Bridal of Triermain*; and then came the first check. The works were praised as highly as his earlier ones, but the sale was not as large, and Scott, who had spent large sums of money on the building that was going on at Abbotsford, looked round anxiously for the reason of this falling off. He found one reason in the popularity of a poem called *Childe Harold* which had been published that summer; and we will look at this new poem and its author before we go on with the history of Walter Scott.

### III. THE ROMANCE OF LOVE AND GLOOM

In the early part of the year 1812, just before *The Lady of the Lake* was published, a young man—dark, handsome, with a scornful curl of the lip, and a head held disdainfully high—returned from a two years' tour of Southern Europe, and came to live in London. He was only twenty-four years old, but he had gone through many experiences, and considered, or affected to consider, himself a weary and embittered man of the world. His father had died when he was three years old; his mother was an unwise, passionate woman, who sometimes spoilt him, and sometimes flew into violent rages and beat and ill-treated him. He had a deformed foot, which he hated to have noticed; he was a proud boy, and his keen sense of this defect made him more arrogant and more ready to take



offence than he was by nature. When he was ten years old his great-uncle died, and he became a peer, with the title of Lord Byron. Three years later he was sent to Harrow, where he was unruly and often in trouble, but he made many friends and was happier than a boy of his nature might have been expected to be at a public school. Then came two wild years at Cambridge. He drank and gambled and gathered round him a company of riotous and disreputable associates. He kept a tame bear and several bull-dogs, which he named after the college authorities. He set all rules at defiance, and when he left the university he was ten thousand pounds in debt.

Even before his schooldays were over he had more than once imagined himself to be desperately in love, and had suffered deeply in consequence; and all his life long love-troubles of one kind or another added to his gloom and recklessness. Yet with all his dissipations and his troubles he found time before he left Cambridge to put together a little volume of verses, most of them written in his schooldays, which was published in 1807 with the title of *Hours of Idleness*. They were not very good poems, though they were remarkable as being the work of a boy, but they showed great promise of better things. They brought Byron little else but scorn and ridicule. People sneered at the rather ostentatious title-page: "By George Gordon, Lord Byron, a Minor." *The Edinburgh Review*, which was then the most important critical journal in the country, made great fun of the poems, and of the preface to them, in which Byron talked, with boyish vanity, of his rank and his situation and pursuits hereafter, which would probably hinder him from writing any more poems. The ridicule was more than the young man could bear. He pretended that he cared nothing, that he even enjoyed it, but really he was furious. He sat down to write an answer, and the answer grew into a fairly long satirical poem, which was published in 1809 with the title *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*. It attacked not only *The Edinburgh Review*, but also nearly every well-known writer



of the day. Scott, it said, was one of those who "rack their brains for lucre, not for fame," and *Marmion* was a "stale romance." Southey was a "ballad-monger" who sang "too often and too long," and "simple Wordsworth" was a "dull disciple" of the same school. Coleridge was only fit to "lull the babe at nurse," and for "spectremongering" Lewis was a worse distributor of horrors than Satan himself. Thus the enraged young poet poured out his wrath on those who had not offended equally with those who had; and when his poem made something of a sensation in London, and several editions were quickly sold out, he triumphed greatly.

Byron had other troubles besides those which came from his desire to be known as a famous poet. He was not rich, although he was a peer, and his wild, dissipated life at college and afterward had brought him very near to ruin. In 1809 he came of age and took the management of his fortune into his own hands, and he soon saw that some change must be made in his way of life. He decided to go abroad at once. He waited only to take the seat in the House of Lords to which he was now entitled, and then he started for a long tour through Southern Europe.

His mother died just before he returned, and this cut him to the heart, for in spite of their violent quarrels the two loved each other very dearly in their own strange, tempestuous fashion. He came home in a mood of deep melancholy. "Embarrassed in my private affairs," he wrote, "indifferent to public, solitary, without the wish to be social; with a body a little enfeebled by a succession of fevers—but a spirit, I trust, yet unbroken—I am returning home without hope and almost without a desire."

He was, perhaps, not quite as miserable as he imagined himself to be. All his life he had a tendency to pose—to make himself an interesting and striking figure in the public eye. Especially he liked to represent himself as a melancholy, world-weary sinner, with a wild and wicked past. All the heroes in his poems are young men of this kind; and even now



we call a dark and gloomy youth, with mournful eyes and a tragic expression, 'Byronic.'

Nobody took much notice of him when he arrived in London. He found that his *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* was almost forgotten, and this wounded his haughty spirit sorely. He had written during his travels what he described as "a lot of Spenserian stanzas" that were to form the first and second cantos of a long poem called *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, and these were published soon after his return. They tell the story of the adventurous journey of a "Childe," or young chieftain, who belongs to a race once famous, but now decayed. He is a dark and gloomy youth,

A shameless wight,  
Sore given to revel and ungodly glee,

who, having early run "through Sin's long labyrinth," can find no delights and is weary of everything that life can offer. He has learned to loathe his native land and to despise his countrymen. He is, in fact, Byron as he appeared to himself, and the voyage of this interesting sinner is the voyage from which Byron has lately returned. There is a great deal of affectation in *Childe Harold*, and a great deal of showy sentiment, but here and there are rich and splendid passages which show what the writer will do some day, when he forgets both his vanity and his wrongs and only remembers that he is a poet. There is a vigorous, moving description of a Spanish bull-fight; there are verses of marvellous beauty singing the praises of Greece—of her heroic past and her present loveliness. When Byron forgets himself, and thinks only of his subject—as when he writes of the sea—he is eager and natural:

He that has sail'd upon the dark blue sea,  
Has view'd at times, I ween, a full fair sight;  
When the fresh breeze is fair as breeze may be,  
The white sail set, the gallant frigate tight;  
Masts, spires, and strand retiring to the right,  
The glorious main expanding o'er the bow,  
The convoy spread like wild swans in their flight,



The dullest sailer wearing bravely now,  
So gaily curl the waves before each dashing prow.

But not for long can he forget that "gloomy wanderer o'er the wave" who is himself; and so every now and then come such verses as:

'Tis night, when Meditation bids us feel  
We once have loved, though love is at an end:  
The heart, lone mourner of its baffled zeal,  
Though friendless now, will dream it had a friend.  
Who with the weight of years would wish to bend,  
When Youth itself survives young Love and Joy?  
Alas! when mingling souls forget to blend,  
Death hath but little left him to destroy!  
Ah! happy years! once more who would not be a boy?

With such dark musings on the experiences of his twenty-two years the youthful Harold passed from one fair scene to another. He saw many people, but he made no friends. *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* has no heroine, though there are some wonderful descriptions of the maidens of Spain and of Greece and many melancholy and bitter reflections on the passion of love.

Oh! many a time and oft had Harold loved,  
Or dream'd he loved, since rapture is a dream.

When *Childe Harold* appeared everyone was still reading and praising *Marmion*, and a copy of it lay on every drawing-room table. Readers turned from Scott's stirring, gallant story to Byron's study of a weary, melancholy young man wandering through Southern Europe seeking some consolation for his wounded feelings, and they found something in it which captured, if not their hearts, at least their imaginations. Perhaps it was the description of distant lands that charmed them, carrying them out of their own dull lives into a new and beautiful world; perhaps it was the hero who thrilled them, with his dark, mournful eyes and his picturesque despair. Whatever the cause, *Childe Harold* made a great and immediate sensation. Noble lords and ladies, wealthy merchants and their families, tradesmen, clerks, footmen, shopboys, artisans, boarding-school misses, and lady's maids—the Byron fever



raged among them all. The attack was as sudden as it was violent; the poet himself wrote in his diary, "I awoke one morning and found myself famous." Small crowds gathered to watch him as he went in and out of his lodgings; great ladies implored him to come to their parties, and courted and flattered him at every opportunity; young gentlemen of all ranks left off their neckcloths, wore loose, open, turn-down collars, and let their hair grow long, because these were the fashions followed by Byron. They copied, too, as well as they could, his haughty, scornful manner and his melancholy airs; and even the most blameless among them hinted darkly at wild and wicked deeds done in the years that were past. When, a year later, another poem, *The Giaour*, was published there was a rush to read it. This time it was a Turkish tale, and the hero was a young Venetian noble of the Christian faith, whom the Mohammedans called a Giaour, which means an infidel.

Who thundering comes on blackest steed,  
With slackened bit, and hoof of speed? . . .  
The foam that streaks the courser's side  
Seems gather'd from the ocean-tide;  
Though weary waves are sunk to rest,  
There's none within his rider's breast;  
And though to-morrow's tempest lower,  
'Tis calmer than thy heart, young Giaour. . . .  
Though young and pale, that sallow front  
Is scathed by fiery passion's brunt.

So it goes on. The Giaour is a real Byronic hero; and this time there is a heroine—Leila, a favourite slave belonging to the harem of Hassan, a Moslem chief.

On her fair cheek's unfading hue  
The young pomegranate's blossoms strew  
Their bloom in blushes ever new;  
Her hair in hyacinthine flow,  
When left to roll its folds below,  
As midst her handmaids in the hall  
She stood superior to them all,  
Hath swept the marble where her feet  
Gleamed whiter than the mountain sleet  
Ere from the cloud that gave it birth  
It fell, and caught one stain of earth.



The story tells how the Giaour loved Leila, and how she agreed to fly with him; how the plot was discovered and Leila thrown into the sea, which was the regular punishment for such an offence; how the Giaour terribly avenged her death on Hassan; and how for the rest of his life he was tortured by sorrow and remorse, and died at last, worn out and heart-broken. It is a wild, romantic tale, but there are more passages of real beauty in it than there are in *Childe Harold*, and it was clear that Byron's genius was becoming stronger and brighter.

*The Bride of Abydos*, published in this same year, 1813, is still better than *The Giaour*. It is another Eastern story of unhappy love and terrible vengeance, with another dark and melancholy hero and another heroine of marvellous loveliness.

*The Corsair* and *Lara* followed in 1814, and Byron was more wildly idolized than ever. Then came the change. In 1815 he married Miss Milbanke, a beautiful heiress, but with a temperament very unlike his own. His manner of living shocked and frightened her, and by and by there was a quarrel. No one knew exactly what it was about, but everybody took the part of Lady Byron, and talked darkly of the terrible misdoings of her husband. The very things for which Byron had been admired in the past were now counted to him as sins. Society had worshipped him for two long years, and now the reaction had come. Ladies shuddered when the name of Byron was mentioned in their hearing. He was hissed at and insulted in the streets, and if he went to any place of resort men and women turned their backs on him. With rage and hatred in his heart Byron, in April 1816, set sail from England, vowing he would never return; and he never did.

He sent home to England, however, from time to time the poems that he wrote during his wanderings, and we will consider some of these in the next section.



## IV. ROMANCE IN PROSE AND POETRY

In the early spring of 1814 Walter Scott, rummaging in the drawers of an old cabinet, came across a manuscript he had written nearly ten years before, and had then put aside and forgotten. It was not a poem, but a story in prose. The first volume was complete, and other passages were sketched out; and, on reading it through, Scott decided that it was quite worth finishing. His latest poem, *Rokeby*, published just before Byron's *Bride of Abydos*, had not sold nearly as well as *Marmion*, although it had been highly praised by the critics. The public was so taken up with Byron and his works that its other favourites were a little neglected. It would be well, Scott thought, to try something in quite a different style, that might win back his lost readers.

He set himself to his task with such good will that he finished the story in three weeks, and had, he says, a great deal of fun in doing it. In July 1814 the book was published, with the title *Waverley, or 'Tis Sixty Years Since*. There was no name on the title-page, for Scott realized that if the readers knew that the story was written by the author of *Marmion* and *The Lady of the Lake* they could not judge it quite impartially; and he wanted to see what favour *Waverley* could win by its own merits.

Very soon the good folk of Edinburgh began to talk about the book, and before July was out it was being eagerly discussed all over the town. The Tales of Terror had by this time become a little stale, and the insipid love-stories, which were the only other kind of fiction to be had at this time, had little charm except for somewhat empty-headed readers. *Waverley* was a stirring tale, written in a fresh and vigorous style, just suited to the Scottish taste. It showed old Scotland as she had been in the age that had just passed, and described manners and customs that, in 1814, elderly men could vaguely remember; and it was flavoured with the dry humour that Scottish people appreciated. It aroused that romantic sympathy



with the exiled and unfortunate Stuarts which lay at the bottom of every Scottish heart—even of such a loyal subject of the reigning king as Walter Scott himself.

Who was the author of *Waverley*? The question was asked all over Edinburgh. Some said Jeffrey, the editor of *The Edinburgh Review*, some said “Monk” Lewis. Some declared it must be Erskine, the Lord Advocate and famous antiquary; others saw in it something of the style of Scott, and thought it must have been written by the poet’s brother Thomas. But there were many who said emphatically, “Walter Scott himself!”

Scott gave no sign, and those who ventured to approach him on the subject got a good-humoured reply of which they could make nothing. The few friends who were in the secret were silent too; and many people forgot the fashion of haughty melancholy that had been set by Byron and became quite lively and interested while they discussed this exciting question of authorship.

Soon the fame of the book spread to London. Scott had doubted whether it would find favour in the South, since its story and its humour were so distinctly Scottish. But he need not have been afraid. London seized upon it as eagerly as Edinburgh had done, and even, for a time, left off reading Byron’s lately published *Corsair*, over which it had lately gone wilder than ever, to talk about the new book.

*Waverley* is a story of the Jacobite rising of 1745. It is not, perhaps, the best of Scott’s novels for young readers to begin with. If you try it you may find the first chapters dry, and feel as if you do not want to go any farther. But if you persevere you will soon arrive happily at the manor-house of Tully-veolan, and pass with Edward Waverley under the great archway adorned with its two enormous bears rampant, and down the dark and gloomy avenue leading to the house. You will enter with him the paved courtyard, so still and silent in the summer sunshine that you might fancy it belonged to a peaceful monastery instead of to the abode of the doughty Baron of Bradwardine. You will see the fountain, into which



a huge stone bear, the wonder of the country for ten miles round, is pouring a stream of cool water, and, looking about you, will find "all sorts of bears, small and large, demi or in full proportion," which "were carved over the windows, upon the ends of the gables, terminated the spouts, and supported the turrets, with the ancient family motto, 'Bewar' the Bar' cut under each." Then, passing with Waverley by a little oaken wicket door into a pleasant walled garden, you will meet the first of the delightful company to which Scott is waiting to introduce you. He is an odd figure, and behaves himself oddly. Sometimes he

held his hands clasped over his head, like an Indian Jogue in the attitude of penance; sometimes he swung them perpendicularly, like a pendulum, on each side; and anon he slapped them swiftly and repeatedly across his breast, like the substitute used by a hackney-coachman for his usual flogging exercise, when his cattle are idle upon the stand, in a clear frosty day. His gait was as singular as his gestures, for at times he hopp'd with great perseverance on the right foot, then changed that supporter to advance in the same manner on the left, and then putting his feet close together, he hopp'd upon both at once. His attire also was antiquated and extravagant. It consisted in a sort of grey jerkin, with scarlet cuffs and slash'd sleeves, showing a scarlet lining; the other parts of the dress corresponded in colour, not forgetting a pair of scarlet stockings, and a scarlet bonnet, proudly surmounted with a turkey's feather.

This is Davie Gellatley. "He is an innocent, sir," the butler explained to Edward Waverley, a little later,

"there is one such in almost every town in the country, but ours is brought far ben. He used to work a day's turn weel enough; but he help'd Miss Rose when she was flemit<sup>1</sup> with the Laird of Killancureit's new English bull, and since that time we ca' him Davie Do-little; indeed we might ca' him Davie Do-naething, for since he got that gay clothing to please his honour and my young mistress (great folks will have their fancies), he has done naething but dance up and down about the toun, without doing a single turn, unless trimming the laird's fishing wand or busking his flies, or maybe catching a dish of trouts at an orra-time.<sup>2</sup> But here comes Miss Rose, who, I take burden upon me for her, will be especial glad to see one of the house of Waverley at her father's mansion of Tully-Veolan."

<sup>1</sup> frightened.

<sup>2</sup> odd moment.



Miss Rose is seventeen years old, "a very pretty girl of the Scotch cast of beauty, that is, with a profusion of hair of paley gold, and a skin like the snow of her own mountains in whiteness." Her father, the Baron of Bradwardine, "was a tall, thin, athletic figure, old indeed and grey-haired, but with every muscle rendered as tough as whipcord by constant exercise." In the company of these two and their friends you will spend several pleasant and not unexciting days at Tully-Veolan, and will perhaps be a little sorry when you must leave it, under the guidance of Evan Dhu the Highlander, even though the object of your journey is to visit the mountain fastness of the great Highland chieftain Fergus Mac-Ivor, Vich Ian Vohr. From the moment when, with Edward Waverley, you set out on this expedition, until (in the last chapters) you attend a wedding, and are present at a notable banquet, you will have not one dull instant. You will visit the cave of the Highland robber, Donald Bean Lean. You will see the handsome young chieftain Fergus Mac-Ivor, famous in history, and his still more famous sister, the black-eyed, stately Flora. You will be introduced to that gallant and unfortunate prince of the Stuart line, Charles Edward. You will see him in triumph and in disaster. You will find yourself in the thick of the battle of Preston, charging wildly with the Highlanders under Fergus Mac-Ivor. You will walk in the mournful procession that accompanied Fergus and his faithful follower, Evan Dhu, to the foot of the scaffold on which they were to die; you will hear the solemn dead march played, and listen to the muffled peal of bells. You will follow Charles Edward through the series of adventures that at length takes him safely out of Scotland; and you will rejoice, with all Edward Waverley's friends, when the young man comes safely through his misfortunes and disasters and reaches that state in which we may reasonably hope he will "live happy ever after." When you close the book you will feel you have made more than one friend whom you will not easily forget.

Scott was delighted with his success, and began almost at



once upon a second novel; and published it, with the title of *Guy Mannering*, a few months after the appearance of Byron's *Lara*. The public had been revelling in this dark and gloomy story of a young Spanish count, as melancholy and as mysterious as Harold or the Giaour, with a brow on which past passions had "drawn furrow'd lines" and a "wither'd heart that would not break." It was a tale of hate and vengeance and unhappy love, of disaster and madness and death, told in passionate and sometimes in exalted poetry. From this readers turned to Scott's fine, stirring, wholesome romance. There was violence and bloodshed enough in this too, and the dark figures of Dirk Hatterick and Meg Merrilees were as terrible as any of those that had appeared in Byron's poem, but there was no heavy atmosphere of gloom and despair. The hero was a fine, manly fellow, who after many trials won his fortune and his bride, and two at least of the characters will be held by every reader in affectionate remembrance. One of these is dear, ugly, faithful, great-hearted Abel Sampson,

commonly called from his occupation as a pedagogue, "Dominie Sampson." He was of low birth, but having evinced, even from his cradle, an uncommon seriousness of disposition, the poor parents were encouraged to hope that their "bairn," as they expressed it, "might wag his pow in a pulpit yet." With an ambitious view to such a consummation they pinched and pared, rose early and lay down late, ate dry bread and drank cold water, to secure Abel the means of learning. Meantime, his tall, ungainly figure, his taciturn and grave manners and some grotesque habits of swinging his limbs and screwing his visage while reciting his task, made poor Sampson the ridicule of all his school-companions. The same qualities secured him at Glasgow college a plentiful share of the same sort of notice. Half the youthful mob 'of the yards' used to assemble regularly to see Dominie Sampson (for he had already attained that honourable title) descend the stairs from the Greek class, with his lexicon under his arm, his long, misshapen legs sprawling abroad, and keeping awkward time to the play of his immense shoulder-blades as they raised and depressed the loose and threadbare black coat which was his constant and only wear. When he spoke, the efforts of the professor . . . were totally inadequate to restrain the inextinguishable laughter of the students, and sometimes even to repress his own. The long, sallow visage,



the goggle eyes, the huge under-jaw which appeared not to open and shut by an act of volition, but to be dropped and hoisted up again by some complicated machinery within the inner man; the harsh and dissonant voice, and the screech-owl notes to which it was exalted when he was exhorted to pronounce more distinctly—all added fresh subject for mirth to the torn cloak and spattered shoe. . . . It was never known that Sampson either exhibited irritability at this ill-usage, or made the least attempt to retort upon his tormentors. He shrunk from college by the most secret paths he could discover, and plunged himself into his miserable lodging, where, for eighteenpence a week, he was allowed the benefit of a straw mattress, and, if his landlady was in good-humour, permission to study his task by her fire. Under all these disadvantages, he obtained a competent knowledge of Greek and Latin, and some acquaintance with the sciences.

After many ups and downs Dominie Sampson at length managed to obtain a post as tutor in the family of the Laird of Ellangowan, and there he lived very contentedly, meeting all shocks of fortune with the ejaculation "Pro-di-gi-ous!" caring affectionately for his charges, and showing himself a loyal friend when times of trouble came.

The second character is the stout farmer Dandie Dinmont of Charlies-hope, with his tribe of children and his six terriers—"There's auld Pepper and auld Mustard, and young Pepper and young Mustard, and little Pepper and little Mustard." There are a host of other characters, real and lovable, who crowd the book, and delight us to-day as they delighted its first readers in 1815.

A week or two before Scott's third novel, *The Antiquary*, was published, in May 1816, Lord Byron left England. From his various resting-places in the countries of Southern Europe he sent home, from time to time, works of different kinds—dramas, lyrics, long romantic poems—which were published and eagerly read in England. In the summer of 1816 came the third canto of *Childe Harold*, which was far finer than the earlier part of the poem; and in the same year came some shorter poems, the famous *Prisoner of Chillon* among them. For more than seven years he led a wild and wandering life, travelling restlessly from place to place, and working by fits



and starts at his poems with fierce energy. His health began to fail, he was harassed by money difficulties and troubles of various kinds; yet still he wrote on, and in England his fame as a poet rose higher and higher.

Meantime, Scott was living a busy, happy life at home. Between 1816 and 1825 he wrote twenty novels, as well as some more long narrative poems. Long before this time the secret of the authorship of the Waverley novels had been revealed, and everybody knew that "the Great Unknown" was Walter Scott. His works brought him in large sums of money, and he had become a rich man. Since 1812 he had been living at Abbotsford, the estate he had bought on the left bank of the Tweed, between Melrose and Selkirk, and one of his chief delights and interests had been in the beautifying and improving of this estate. He had built a great house there and filled it with all kinds of treasures; and he had made gardens and plantations which he hoped would blossom and would produce noble trees for his children and his children's children after him.

The story of Scott's life at Abbotsford, where he spent a large part of each year, is almost as interesting as a Waverley novel. Round the kindly, large-hearted master of the house gathered his family, his servants, his workmen, and a host of other dependants, all looking to him for help and guidance, all adoring the "Shirra," as they called him, with reference to his office as Sheriff of Selkirkshire. There were nearly always visitors staying in the house, and almost every day strangers from distant parts of England and Scotland would knock at its doors, eager to see the great man who was the idol of both countries. All were hospitably received, and of every gathering and every party of pleasure Scott was the life and soul, keeping the fun and merriment going by his high spirits and by the kindly thoughtfulness that prevented any member of the company from feeling neglected or unappreciated. He was at home everywhere—perhaps even more at home with the plain folk of the countryside than with his richer neighbours.



With all his servants he was on the friendliest of terms. There was Tom Purdie, his right-hand man on the estate. Tom had been brought before the Sheriff on a charge of poaching, and had moved Scott's kindly heart by his tale of misfortune and poverty. He had been given work at Abbotsford and had shown himself faithful and capable and entirely devoted to his master's interests, though bent on forwarding them in his own way. Scott delighted both in his devotion and his obstinacy. John Lockhart, Scott's son-in-law, tells how, one Sunday afternoon, the Sheriff and some of his guests were walking round the Abbotsford estate, accompanied by the faithful Tom.

As we walked homeward, Scott, being a little fatigued, laid his left hand on Tom's shoulder, and leaned heavily for support, chatting to his "Sunday pony," as he called the affectionate fellow, just as freely as with the rest of the party; and Tom put in his word shrewdly and manfully, and grinned and grunted whenever the joke chanced to be within his apprehension. It was easy to see that his heart swelled within him from the moment that the Sheriff got his collar in his grip. There arose a little dispute between them about what tree or trees ought to be cut down in a hedgerow that we passed, and Scott seemed somewhat ruffled with finding that some previous hints of his on that head had not been attended to. When we got into motion again his hand was on Constable's shoulder—and Tom dropped a pace or two to the rear, until we approached a gate, when he jumped forward and opened it. "Give us a pinch of your snuff, Tom," quoth the Sheriff—Tom's mull was produced, and the hand resumed its position. I was much diverted by Tom's behaviour when we at length reached Abbotsford. There were some garden chairs on the green in front of the cottage porch. Scott sat down on one of them to enjoy the view of his new tower as it glowed in the sunset, and Constable and I did the like. Mr Purdie remained lounging near us for a few minutes, and then asked the Sheriff "to speak a word." They withdrew together into the garden—and Scott presently rejoined us with a particularly comic expression of face. As soon as Tom was out of sight he said, "Will ye guess what he has been saying now?—Well, this is a great satisfaction! Tom assures me that he has thought the matter over, and *will take my advice* about the thinning of that clump behind Captain Fergusson's!"

Scott considered himself responsible in some measure for the happiness and well-being of the poor folk who lived round



about Abbotsford. Even when he was away in Edinburgh he did not forget them. "It makes me shiver in the midst of superfluous comforts to think of the distress of others," he wrote to his overseer, in the middle of the hard winter of 1820. "Ten pounds of the sixty pounds [which he had sent] I wish you to distribute among our poorer neighbours, so as may best aid them." And again, a week later, "Do not let the poor bodies want for a £5, or even a £10 more or less:

"We'll get a blessing wi' the lave,  
And never miss't."

With all his hospitality to rich neighbours, and kindness for poor ones, with the care of his estate, with the numberless services he did for writers less fortunate than himself, with the countless calls upon his time in one direction or another, it is difficult to see how Scott managed to produce novel after novel, as well as a great mass of other literary work. It was done by strict method and regular industry. Scott had, almost as soon as he had made up his mind that he was to be a writer, laid down certain rules which he believed would help him to do his work in the best way; and to these rules he kept, as far as circumstances would allow him, for the rest of his life. Every morning he rose at five, lit the fire in his study if the day was cold, dressed himself carefully, and sat down to work. He went on steadily, with no interruptions, and no company except that of one or two of his favourite dogs, who soon got used to lying in perfect quietness to watch their master while he worked. Breakfast-time was between nine and ten o'clock, and when the meal was ready Scott came down in happy mood, feeling that the greater part of his day's labour was done. After a merry breakfast with his family he went resolutely upstairs once more, and worked for another two hours; and then, unless some urgent matter arose that must be attended to, he was free of his writing for the rest of the day.

So his happy, useful life went on, and the books that he wrote in those years are among the best-loved treasures of our



great literary inheritance. There is a long list of them—*Old Mortality*, *The Black Dwarf*, *Rob Roy*, *The Heart of Midlothian*, *The Bride of Lammermoor*, *The Legend of Montrose*, *Ivanhoe*, *The Monastery*, *The Abbot*, *Kenilworth*, *The Pirate*, *The Fortunes of Nigel*, *Peperil of the Peak*, *Quentin Durward*, *St Ronan's Well*, *Redgauntlet*, *The Talisman*, and *The Betrothed*. They brought Scott in large sums of money, which he spent very freely. He bought more and more land, so that Abbotsford grew into a large estate. He filled his house with treasures. Its guest-chambers were always ready to receive visitors, and from far and near friends and admirers flocked in, and were entertained in the most generous fashion. Large sums were given away, not only in subscriptions to public charities, but in private gifts to needy and distressed persons, the tale of whose misfortunes had touched Scott's kindly heart. If money ran short he had only to sit down and write another novel; it seemed as if he had in his hand a magic purse whose contents could never be exhausted. In 1820 he was made a baronet.

In 1824, when Scott was at the height of his prosperity, came the news that Lord Byron was dead. He had died nobly, and in a great cause. During his restless wanderings in Southern Europe he had become greatly interested in the struggle of the Greeks to free themselves from the Turkish rule, and in August 1823 he and his friend Trelawny went to Greece and offered themselves as volunteers in the War of Liberation. The Greeks received them gladly, and gave Byron a command in their army. Byron's nobler qualities quickly showed themselves. His vanity and his affectations fell away from him. He worked with his whole heart for the cause he had taken up, and the courage and wisdom that he showed soon made the Greeks look to him as a leader. But his strength was not equal to the task he was trying to do. Life in the Greek army was hard and painful; food was scarce; the house in which Byron lived was situated on boggy ground from which unhealthy mists arose. On April 11, 1824, he fell ill with rheumatic fever, and on the 19th he died.



The Greeks mourned deeply for this heroic Englishman who had given his life for their cause. His body was embalmed, and a funeral service was held at Missolonghi, with all the honours commonly given to a prince of the royal line. Afterward the body was taken to England and buried in the church of Hucknall Torkard, the nearest town to Newstead Abbey, the ancestral home of the Byrons.

On the 22nd of the January previous to his death, the day on which he completed his thirty-sixth year, Byron had written his last poem, and its last two verses form the best epitaph that could be written upon him:

If thou regrettest thy youth, *why live?*  
The land of honourable death  
Is here:—up to the field, and give  
Away thy breath!

Seek out—less often sought than found—  
A soldier's grave, for thee the best;  
Then look around, and choose thy ground,  
And take thy rest.

The closing years of Sir Walter Scott's life were as heroic and as tragic, if not as glorious, as the closing years of Byron. Money difficulties, partly caused by his own large expenditure, partly by the fault of others, began to press upon him. He had associated himself with the publishing firm of Ballantyne, and when this firm, in 1826, through trade depression and mismanagement, failed, he found himself liable for about £130,000.

He met misfortune magnificently. He refused to be made a bankrupt, and at fifty-six years of age set to work to accomplish what seemed an impossibility—the payment of this huge debt. He had other troubles, too, for Lady Scott was lying near to death, and his eldest grandchild, little Johnnie Lockhart, whom he dearly loved, was fading quickly away. Yet gallantly the brave man set himself to his task. In two months, by hard and incessant toil, he produced *Woodstock*, one of the finest of his works, and this brought in £8000. In April Lady Scott died; yet still he worked on undaunted. In 1827 came



his *Life of Napoleon* and the first series of his *Tales of a Grandfather*. These enabled him to pay his creditors a dividend of six shillings in the pound. In two years he had earned £40,000. In 1828 he wrote *The Fair Maid of Perth*, and began to prepare and write prefaces for a collected edition of his works. In 1829 came *Anne of Geierstein*. By this time his health was giving way under the strain of hard and continuous work and many sorrows. He gave himself no rest. Early in 1830 he had a slight paralytic stroke, but as soon as he recovered he began a new novel, *Count Robert of Paris*. Then came apoplectic attacks which left him alarmingly weak and weary, but he would not give up his work, though his brain power was seriously affected, and the new book, *Castle Dangerous*, which he insisted upon beginning, has little of the old charm. Toward the end of 1831 the Government offered him a frigate for a voyage to Italy, and his friends, with a last hope that complete rest and change might even then restore him, persuaded him to take the voyage. His eldest son, Walter, and his daughter Anne went with him. But his health did not improve, and he grew restless away from his native country that he loved so dearly. In May 1832, to his great delight, the little party turned homeward. By June 9 they had reached Nimeguen, and there Sir Walter had another paralytic stroke. Still he insisted on continuing the journey, though now he had to be carried in and out of trains and boats. He reached London on June 13, and was taken to a hotel, where he lay in a kind of stupor for several weeks, only rousing himself at times to speak to those around him, and to express the one longing that possessed him—to be at home at Abbotsford.

At length his doctors agreed that the journey would do him less harm than would this painful and incessant yearning. On July 7 he left London, and on the 11th reached Abbotsford. Something of his old cheerfulness came back, and he was able to be wheeled through the house and the gardens that were so dear to him. But soon his strength began to fail, and, though he lingered on for two months, it was in a state of extreme



weakness; and on September 21 he died. His children were all about his bed as he sank into his last peaceful sleep.

It was a beautiful day—so warm, that every window was wide open—and so perfectly still that the sound of all others most delicious to his ear, the gentle ripple of the Tweed over its pebbles, was distinctly audible as we knelt around the bed, and his eldest son kissed and closed his eyes.



---

## *Chapter XXXI*

CHARLES LAMB

**T**HE twenty years that came between 1805 and 1825 were wonderful years in the history of English literature. They were the years during which the public was learning to know and value the poetry of Wordsworth, the years during which the lovers of romance were being delighted by the stories of Scott and Byron and Southey and a host of lesser writers. They were the years, also, as we are now going to see, when great masterpieces in three other classes of literature—the essay, the lyric, and the domestic novel—were being produced. If by the decree of some malicious fairy we were forced to give up the books written during any one twenty years of our history we might well say, “Not these! Leave us the books belonging to these twenty years, and leave us those that belong to the twenty years following 1590. Then, if you must rifle our store, we shall have at least some of its most precious treasures still safe in our grasp.”

There were so many readers now that the demand for books was greater than it had ever been before; and not for one kind of book only, but for many kinds, to suit different tastes. Most of the readers wanted romance, and romance, as we have seen, could take more than one form. But romance was not enough for the more thoughtful and the more active-minded among them. These read all sorts of books, old and new, and loved to discuss and criticize what they read. They were eager for guidance in picking out the best from the mass of literature that was being produced, and this caused them to read gladly essays on different writers and their works. They were interested in public questions, and in the manners and morals of their day. They were learning to enjoy style in writing, and to appreciate a finely turned sentence for the sake of its sound, as



well as of its sense. All these things made the essay popular, and so we get a group of distinguished essayists, who wrote on a great variety of subjects, each expressing his own opinions in his own style.

In this chapter we shall tell the story of the greatest of these essayists—Charles Lamb. It is one of the most beautiful stories in the history of our literature, one of the saddest, yet one of the gayest. It is the story of a brother and sister who were as devoted to each other as were William and Dorothy Wordsworth. Their lives had little of the calm happiness that those other two enjoyed; but they had brave and gallant hearts, and they learned to laugh even while they knew tragedy was waiting at the door.

Charles Lamb, as a small boy in long blue coat and yellow stockings, was one of those who stood in the cloisters of Christ's Hospital and lifted his bare, cropped head to stare at his tall schoolfellow, Samuel Coleridge, who was pouring forth mighty floods of eloquence. Lamb left school in 1789, when he was fourteen years old, and went home to live with his family at the house in the Inner Temple which belonged to his father's employer, to whom his mother acted as housekeeper. There was an elder brother, John, aged twenty-six, a clerk in the South Sea House, who did not live at home, but had lodgings of his own; and there was a sister, Mary, twenty-five, who was as clever, as sweet-natured, and as unselfish as Charles himself.

Charles was set as soon as possible to earn his own living, and became a clerk, first in the South Sea House with his brother, and afterward in the East India Company. By this time the family had moved to a small house in Little Queen Street, Holborn, and Mary had set up a small dressmaking business. The mother and father were growing old and feeble, and Aunt Hetty, who had come to live with them, was older and feebler still. Cheerful, busy Mary, who managed everything and looked after everybody, was the mainstay of the household, and was Charles's friend and helper in all that he



did. He had kept up his friendship with Coleridge, and when Coleridge was in London they met frequently. He had written a few poems, some of which, with Coleridge's help, he managed to get published in one of the newspapers. He fell in love, but his love brought him only unhappiness, and it was perhaps this disappointment that caused his attack of madness at the end of the year 1795. "The six weeks that finished last year and began this, your very humble servant spent very agreeably in a madhouse at Hoxton," he wrote to Coleridge. There was madness in the Lamb family, but this was the only time it attacked Charles. His sister was not so fortunate.

In the autumn of 1796 it was noticed that kindly, sensible Mary was growing a little strange in her manner; and then, suddenly, came the tragedy. One day the table was being prepared for dinner, and Mr and Mrs Lamb, Mary, and a girl who was apprenticed to her to learn dressmaking were in the room. Suddenly Mary seized a knife from the table and rushed at the girl. Mrs Lamb tried to stop her, and Mary turned on her mother and attacked her with the knife, killing her almost at once.

This was the scene to which poor Charles came home on that dreadful September day. He was, he wrote to Coleridge, just in time to snatch the knife out of his sister's grasp and to save his father from all but a slight injury; and then his loved Mary was taken away to the madhouse, and he was left alone to care for the two old people in the stricken home.

After some months Mary recovered, and on Charles promising to look after her and see that she was kept from doing harm she was allowed to leave the madhouse. But he could not bring her home to be left all day with his helpless father (Aunt Hetty had died while she was away), and so, out of his scanty salary, he paid for a lodging for her with kindly people who would care for her well, and he spent as much time with her as he could. When his father died in 1799 Charles and Mary went into lodgings together, and from that time until Charles died thirty-five years later they were never parted,



except on those mournful occasions—far apart at first, but growing more frequent as the years went on—when another fit of her sad malady threatened poor Mary, and once more she had to leave her home for the treatment that would bring back her reason. She always had warning when such a fit was coming on, and she and her brother, both weeping bitterly, would set out together and walk across the fields to Hoxton Asylum, where Charles would leave her and go sorrowfully back to his lonely home.

But they had their gay and happy times as well as their sad ones. Mary was of a calm and sensible disposition, and she knew that the terrible deed she had done was not to be laid as a sin to her charge. She had loved her mother dearly and had served her devotedly for years; and she was strong enough to resolve that she would not entirely spoil her own life and the life of her brother Charles by useless mourning over the mad act that had, she felt, been really none of hers. So she was still the cheerful, practical elder sister who mothered and tended the brother who had always been so dependent on her care. Charles had little of her clear, calm common sense. He was naturally high-spirited and fun-loving, with a sweet, affectionate disposition, and a whimsical humour that made him the most delightful of companions.

The brother and sister had many friends, and Charles loved company. But neither of them cared for visiting. They were shy and uncomfortable in other peoples' houses and always glad to get back to their own quiet home; and so it came about that the friends who wanted to see them had to climb the three flights of stairs that led to the chambers in the Temple where they had made their lodging, and seek them there. Gradually there grew up a custom of holding gatherings in these chambers on Wednesday evenings. Some of the most famous people of the day came to these gatherings—Coleridge and Wordsworth and Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt and De Quincey; William Godwin, the author of *Political Justice*, and Thomas Talfourd, afterward a famous lawyer; Fanny



Burney's brother James, who in his young days had gone exploring with Captain Cook; well-known actors and actresses, including Charles Lamb's beloved Miss Kelly; with other less-known, humbler folk, all of them with some charm or quality that made them acceptable to the company. Wednesday after Wednesday, through more than twenty years, a group of these people would assemble in the low-ceilinged room with its dark, old-fashioned furniture, where Mary and Charles waited to welcome them. The big table would be pushed back against the wall and card-tables set out; and when everyone was busy playing cards and talking and smoking the old servant, Becky, would bring in a shoulder of mutton or a beefsteak-pie, and set it on the table with a great dish of roast potatoes and a jug of foaming porter. The guests would help themselves, then sit and talk and argue and play whist or cribbage until the small hours of the morning.

All sorts of questions were brought forward for argument at these meetings, and books of almost every kind were discussed and criticized. Sometimes there was disagreement, and then the talk grew loud and heated; and always there was laughter and joking and a stream of puns, in which the company delighted. Charles Lamb loved to discourse on the Elizabethan writers, who had quite gone out of fashion, and were almost forgotten until his *Specimens of English Poets who lived about the Time of Shakespeare* brought them back to remembrance. He called these writers his "midnight darlings," and on the evenings when he and his sister were alone he would sit and read happily in some old folio of their works until midnight was long past, in spite of Mary's efforts to send him off to bed. All day he worked at monotonous tasks in the East India Office; at five o'clock he came home, and was free to give himself up to his beloved books and his writing.

He wrote chiefly that he might make a little money to add to his meagre salary as a clerk. He tried stories and poems and articles, and jokes, for which he was paid sixpence each, for the newspapers. He and his sister wrote a book of stories for



children which they called *Mrs Leicester's School*, and which was fairly successful. In 1806 he wrote a play called *Mr H—*, which was hissed off the stage; but the next year came the great success of *Tales from Shakespeare*, which he and Mary wrote together. Very likely you yourself were first introduced to Shakespeare by Charles and Mary Lamb. Next year came the *Specimens*, of which we have already spoken.

Things were looking brighter for the Lambs, and they were able to afford themselves some small luxuries; but the real triumph did not come until twelve years later. Then *The London Magazine* was started, and Lamb was asked to contribute. The magazine was a popular one, and each number contained essays by well-known writers of the day, such as it was hoped would please the public taste; but among all the good things readers soon began to pick out Lamb's contributions, and to turn eagerly to that part of the magazine which contained one of the essays of Elia, which was the name under which he wrote.

Many of these essays tell of people and places that Charles Lamb had known, or of incidents in his own life. *The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple* tells of his father and his father's employer, Samuel Salt. *Blakesmoor in H—shire* is the great house in Hertfordshire where his grandmother was house-keeper, and where he and Mary spent many happy holidays during their childhood. *Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago* is about his schooldays, and the beautiful *Dream Children* is inspired by that old, unhappy love affair that clouded his youth. In *Mackery End, in Hertfordshire* he describes his sister Mary, under the name of Bridget Elia. He says:

I have obligations to Bridget, extending beyond the period of memory. We house together, old bachelor and maid, in a sort of double singleness. . . . We agree pretty well in our tastes and habits—yet so, as “with a difference.” We are generally in harmony, with occasional bickerings—as it should be among near relations.

✓ Some of the essays are on plays and writers and literary



matters, and the readers of *The London Magazine* turned eagerly to these for guidance in their general reading. There never was such a critic as Charles Lamb. "No one," says Hazlitt, "will love the old English writers again as he did. Others may have a leaning towards them—a respect, an admiration—a sort of young man's love; but the true relishing is over; the close familiar friendship is dissolved." His readers could not help catching his enthusiasm, and began to understand how wonderful was the inheritance that they had been neglecting.

Milton almost requires a solemn service of music to be played before you enter upon him. But he brings his music, to which, who listens, had need bring docile thoughts, and purged ears.

Winter evenings—the world shut out—with less of ceremony the gentle Shakespeare enters. At such a season, *The Tempest*, or his own *Winter's Tale*—

These two poets you cannot avoid reading aloud—to yourself, or (as it chances) to some single person listening. More than one—and it degenerates into an audience.<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes Lamb wrote on general subjects—on anything, in fact, that happened to come into his head—Valentine's Day, roast pig, weddings, ears, old china. Here is a passage from the essay on *The Praise of Chimney-sweepers*:

I like to meet a sweep—understand me—not a grown sweeper—old chimney-sweepers are by no means attractive—but one of those tender novices, blooming through their first nigritude, the maternal washings not quite effaced from the cheek—such as come forth with the dawn or somewhat earlier, with their little professional notes sounding like the *peep peep* of a young sparrow; or liker to the matin lark should I pronounce them, in their aerial ascents not seldom anticipating the sunrise? . . .

When a child, what a mysterious pleasure it was to witness their operation! to see a chit no bigger than one's-self enter, one knew not by what process, into what seemed the *fauces Averni*<sup>2</sup>—to pursue him in imagination as he went sounding on through so many dark stifling caverns, horrid shades!—to shudder with the idea that "now, surely, he must be lost for ever!"—to revive at hearing his feeble shout of discovered daylight—and then (O fulness of delight)

<sup>1</sup> *Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading.*

<sup>2</sup> "The jaws of hell."



running out of doors, to come just in time to see the sable phenomenon emerge in safety, the brandished weapon of his art victorious like some flag waved over a conquered citadel! I seem to remember having been told, that a bad sweep was once left in a stack with his brush, to indicate which way the wind blew. . . .

Reader, if thou meetest one of these small gentry in thy early rambles, it is good to give him a penny. It is better to give him twopence. If it be starving weather, and to the proper troubles of his hard occupation, a pair of kibed<sup>1</sup> heels (no unusual accompaniment) be superadded, the demand on thy humanity will surely rise to a tester.

As the years went on Charles Lamb grew more prosperous. By 1823 his salary had risen to about £700 a year, and he was making a good deal of money also by his writings. In August 1823 the brother and sister took a house at Islington, which, although it was then a country district, was yet near enough to Charles's beloved London to enable him to wander through its streets as he loved to do. "Enchanting London," he had written years before to his friend Manning,

whose dirtiest, drab-frequented alley, and her lowest bowing tradesman, I would not exchange for Skiddaw, Helvellyn. . . . All the streets and pavements are pure gold, I warrant you. At least, I know an alchemy that turns her mud into that metal—a mind that loves to be at home in crowds.

In April 1825 came a great event. The directors of the East India Company, to mark their appreciation of Lamb's long and faithful service, and their admiration of his writings, offered him an immediate retiring allowance of two-thirds of his salary. "A magnificent offer," wrote Lamb, in his essay *The Superannuated Man*.

I do not know what I answered between surprise and gratitude, but it was understood that I accepted their proposal, and I was told that I was free from that hour to leave their service. I stammered out a bow, and at just ten minutes after eight I went home—for ever. . . . For the first day or two I felt stunned, overwhelmed. I could only apprehend my felicity; I was too confused to taste it sincerely. I wandered about, thinking I was happy, and knowing I was not. I was in the condition of a prisoner in the old

<sup>1</sup> chilblained.



Bastile, suddenly let loose after a forty years' confinement. I could scarce trust myself with myself. It was like passing out of Time into Eternity—for it is a sort of Eternity for a man to have his Time all to himself. It seemed to me that I had more time on my hands than I could ever manage. From a poor man, poor in Time, I was suddenly lifted up into a vast revenue; I could see no end of my vast possessions; I wanted some steward, or judicious bailiff, to manage my estates in Time for me. . . . Now that those giddy raptures have subsided, I have a quiet home-feeling of the blessedness of my condition. I am in no hurry. Having all holidays, I am as though I had none.

Lamb's slight stutter gave quaintness to his speech. On one occasion Coleridge said to him, "Charles, did you ever hear me preach?" To which Lamb replied, "I n-n-never heard you do a-a-a-anything else"; and to a lady who asked him how he liked babies he retorted, "B-b-b-boiled, ma'am!" He was very fond of puns, and in one of his essays repeats the story of the Oxford scholar who, meeting a man carrying a hare, said: "Is that your *own* hare, or a wig?"

The years that followed were calm, though they were clouded by the steady increase of Mary Lamb's infirmity. Lamb wrote little during these later years of his life. He spent much time in reading his old favourite books, and he wandered about the lanes of Enfield and Edmonton finding them sadly different from the crowded London streets that he loved. He had always been thin and frail, but now he grew thinner than ever, and his noble head, with its dark hair and broad, open brow, seemed almost too large for his wasted body. But his brown eyes were still soft and bright, and the wonderful smile, sad and tender and sweet, which his friends loved still came and went. He had not lost the whimsical humour which had helped him to meet gallantly the deep sorrows life had brought him, and he could still jest about his own infirmities and flash out a witty answer to the remarks of others. The loss of some of his old friends cut him to the heart. The death of Coleridge in July 1834 gave him a blow from which he could not recover. "His great and dear spirit still haunts me. I cannot think a thought, I cannot make a criticism on men or books, without



---

an ineffectual turning and reference to him. He was the proof and touchstone of all my cogitations."

Before five months had passed Lamb had gone to join his friend. On a cold December afternoon, as he was taking his lonely walk along the London road, thinking sadly of Coleridge dead, and Mary away in the asylum, he slipped and fell, slightly wounding his face. Erysipelas set in, and on December 27, 1834, he died. Mary lived for another thirteen years, sinking gradually into complete insanity.



---

## Chapter XXXII

### THE LYRISTS

#### I. KEATS

ENGLAND has always had, as we have seen, a company of sweet singers to make the songs she loves. The literary taste of the English people has changed in many ways as the years have passed; they have wanted first one book and then another. But in this thing they have never changed; they have always wanted songs; and they have always had them. The chorus began in early medieval times; it went on all through the Middle Ages, and grew more full and tuneful and lovely in the great days of Queen Elizabeth. It waned with the Caroline poets, and grew painfully thin during the eighteenth century; then rose again, clear and heart-stirring, with Robert Burns. Next came Wordsworth, with wonderful harmonies, but with less of the light-hearted lilt of true song, and Coleridge, with his high and thrilling note; and now here are Shelley and Keats to give to the lyric a swiftness and passion it has never had before.

In 1805, the year in which Scott published *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, both these poets were at school. Percy Bysshe Shelley, who was the elder by three years, was at Eton, and John Keats was at a grammar school, kept by a Mr Cowden Clarke, at Enfield. He was the son of a livery-stable proprietor, who had died when he was a small boy, and had left his wife with only a small income on which to bring up her three sons and one daughter. She died before John's school-days were ended, leaving the children in the care of a guardian.

When John left school he was apprenticed to a surgeon at Edmonton. He did not like his work, though he did it conscientiously and well. He loved books and music, and he



delighted in all kinds of poetry. In 1814 he came up to London to study at Guy's Hospital, and lived in lodgings with his two brothers, Tom and George. He worked hard at the hospital, and spent all his spare time writing poetry. He was anxious and troubled. His brother Tom was showing signs of the consumption of which his mother had died; he had money worries too, for their income was not large enough to pay the expenses of the three brothers and keep their sister Fanny at school.

He had a very good friend in Mr Cowden Clarke, the son of his old schoolmaster, a clever and cultured man of letters. Cowden Clarke had seen some of Keats' boyish poems, and they had amazed and delighted him. He was a friend of Leigh Hunt's, and went often to his pleasant house at Hampstead. One evening in the spring of 1816 he took some of Keats' poems with him and showed them to the company. Leigh Hunt and his friends saw at once that here was true poetry, and they eagerly besought Cowden Clarke to bring the young writer with him when next he came. So, in a happy day for himself, John Keats joined the company. Hunt's genial, cheerful companionship was just what he needed, and the warm, unstinted admiration that his new friends—poets themselves, some of them, and all of them men who loved poetry—gave to his work put fresh heart and courage into him. He always came away from the Hampstead house feeling better and happier.

For I am brimful of the friendliness  
That in a little cottage I have found,

he wrote in one of his poems. He soon made friends with all the circle of Hunt's visitors, except Shelley. Keats was very sensitive, and he imagined that Shelley, whose father was a wealthy baronet, must look down upon the son of a keeper of livery-stables. No such idea had ever come into Shelley's head. He admired Keats' poetry intensely, and would gladly have made friends with him, but the other held aloof, and though



they met a good many times during this year 1816 the two were never more than mere acquaintances.

In October 1816 Keats came of age, and then he made a great and daring resolve. He would leave the hospital and give all his time to the writing of poetry. The group of friends at Leigh Hunt's encouraged the plan, and so did his two brothers. The latter were very proud of John and his poetry, and willing to help him as much as they could out of their share of the small sum of money that their parents had left. So the great venture was made, and the young man went bravely to work to try to put into words the vision of beauty that was always before his eyes. In March 1817 he published a small volume of poems. There was nothing very wonderful in the book; the poems, it was clear, were the work of a young man who had still much to learn. An intelligent reader would see in them the promise of great and splendid things to come; but very few readers troubled about them at all. The public was still reading with rapture *The Corsair* and *Lara* and *Waverley* and *Guy Mannering*. It had no time to search out the hidden beauties of Keats' little volume. Very few copies were sold, and very little notice was taken of the poems, even of the really fine sonnet, *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer*, which has since become famous.

Keats took his failure bravely and would not be disheartened. He would go on and do better, and be a poet yet; for he felt that he had the true spirit of a poet within him. He went away from London by himself that he might work undisturbed, and he tried bravely to overcome the extreme sensitiveness which was apt to make him always either unduly excited or unduly depressed. "I will begin," he wrote,

Now while I cannot hear the city's din;  
Now while the early budders are just new,  
And run in mazes of the youngest hue  
About old forests; while the willow trails  
Its delicate amber; and the dairy pails  
Bring home increase of milk. And, as the year  
Grows lush in juicy stalks, I'll smoothly steer



My little boat, for many quiet hours,  
With streams that deepen freshly into bowers.  
Many and many a verse I hope to write,  
Before the daisies, vermeil rimm'd and white,  
Hide in deep herbage; and ere yet the bees  
Hum about globes of clover and sweet peas,  
I may be near the middle of my story.  
O may no wintry season, bare and hoary,  
See it half finish'd; but let Autumn bold,  
With universal tinge of sober gold,  
Be all about me when I make an end.

When Keats came back to London the brothers moved to Hampstead to be near their friends, and in the bright summer weather they all often walked together over the breezy heath. As they walked Keats would recite to them passages from the poem he was writing. He had a beautiful voice, and as he went on half chanting the melodious lines his bright, glowing eyes took on "an inward look perfectly divine, like a Delphian priestess who saw visions." Sometimes his friends disagreed with what he had written, or with the way in which it was expressed, and then there were great arguments, while Keats held stoutly to his own opinion against them all; and often the discussion would end with a great burst of boyish laughter, and there would be no more serious talk that evening, only a succession of jokes and puns and nonsense.

By November Keats had finished his new poem, *Endymion*, and in the spring of the next year it was published. It tells the story of the beautiful youth who, according to the classical legend, was beloved by the moon, and who, by her power, was carried off to Mount Latmos and cast into an eternal sleep. Every night she visited him, and the love between the mortal and the goddess grew stronger as time went by. Keats told the story in rich and glowing verse, with many beautiful images and wonderful descriptions. There were faults in plenty in the poem, and even things which a harsh critic might call absurdities, but it was nevertheless a great and wonderful work. Its opening line is so well known now that it has almost become a proverb:



A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:  
Its loveliness increases; it will never  
Pass into nothingness; but still will keep  
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep  
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.

A month or two after *Endymion* was published Keats started on a walking tour through Scotland with his friend Charles Brown. They had bad weather, and time after time were exposed to heavy rain, and they found it difficult to get proper food. Keats fell ill, and was obliged to give up the expedition and go home. He arrived in London just in time for the reviews of *Endymion* which were appearing in the magazines. *Blackwood's*, one of the most important, had several times before attacked the Cockney School of writers, as it called Leigh Hunt and his friends. Now it fell upon John Keats. "The frenzy of the poems," it said, "was bad enough in its way, but it did not alarm us half so seriously as the calm, imperturbable, drivelling idiocy of *Endymion*. Back to the shop, Mr John, back to plaster, pills, and ointment-boxes." Next came an article in *The Quarterly Review*, which accused "Johnny Keats" of being a mere copyist of Mr Leigh Hunt, only "ten times more tiresome and absurd."

All Keats' friends were hotly indignant at these reviews, but he himself took them very quietly. No one could see the faults of the poem more clearly than he did; it fell so far short of what he had hoped and intended to write. But he knew quite well that it was not the worthless thing the reviewers called it, and, knowing that, he was able to bear their injustice with fortitude. It has been said, and believed by many people, that these harsh reviews were the cause of his death; Byron said contemptuously that he was "snuffed out by an article." But this is very far from the truth. Keats had too brave and gallant a soul to be easily crushed. It was his body that was weak, not his spirit.

He went on working quietly and hard, but his health failed rapidly, and it became clear that the terrible disease from which other members of his family had suffered had now



attacked him. His brother Tom died a few months after *Endymion* was published, and this was a heavy blow, for Tom had loved and understood him better than anyone else. An unhappy love affair added to his troubles; money worries constantly tormented him. Yet it was in the years between 1818 and 1820 that he did his best work. In 1820 he published another volume of poems, and in these the promise that his earlier works had shown was magnificently fulfilled. The volume contained *Lamia* and *Hyperion*, which, like *Endymion*, dealt with classical subjects; *Isabella* and *The Eve of St Agnes*, which are romantic poems, founded on medieval legends; the strange and lovely poem *La Belle Dame sans Merci*; the three great odes, *To a Nightingale*, *On a Grecian Urn*, and *To Autumn*; and other pieces. Here is the ode *To Autumn*, which I have chosen because it is one of the shortest:

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,  
 Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;  
 Conspiring with him how to load and bless  
 With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;  
 To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,  
 And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;  
 To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells  
 With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,  
 And still more, later flowers for the bees,  
 Until they think warm days will never cease,  
 For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?  
 Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find  
 Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,  
 Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;  
 Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,  
 Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook  
 Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:  
 And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep  
 Steady thy laden head across a brook;  
 Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,  
 Thou watchest the last oozy hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?  
 Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—  
 While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,  
 And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;



Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn  
 Among the river salallows, borne aloft  
 Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;  
 And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;  
 Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft  
 The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;  
 And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

Just before this volume was published Keats had an attack of hæmorrhage or bleeding from the lungs, which showed that the disease from which he was suffering had reached a dangerous stage. He was very ill for some weeks, then seemed to be recovering; but other attacks followed the first, and it was clear that death was not far off. The news that his book was selling well and that *The Edinburgh Review* had given it high praise cheered though it could not help him. As the summer drew to an end the doctors strongly advised him to leave England for Italy. Shelley, who was then living at Pisa, wrote with the utmost kindness and delicacy inviting the dying poet to be his guest for the winter. He had invited him before, when *Endymion* was being written, but Keats had refused, feeling, perhaps, that the richer poet was offering him patronage. He refused this second invitation also, but his letter shows that he knew Shelley better now and was deeply moved by the kindness and friendliness of the offer. At length Keats decided to go to Rome, and one of his devoted friends, Joseph Severn, agreed to go with him. They set out in September, travelling by sea, and had rough weather in the Channel and in the Bay of Biscay, so that when they reached Naples Keats was much exhausted. From Naples they went on to Rome. For three months Keats lingered on, tenderly nursed by Severn, who had given up his own work as a painter and his chances of advancement to tend his dying friend. On February 23, 1821, very quietly and peacefully, the end came.

Keats was buried in the English burying-place at Rome. On his tomb were inscribed the words which he himself had asked Severn to place there, "Here lies one whose name was writ in water." We know now how mistaken was this mourn-



ful self-judgment. The name of the poet who died before he had completed his twenty-fifth year is written in letters that will never fade on the roll of fame. Many of our finest critics believe that if Keats had lived he would have been the greatest of our English lyric poets; and even though he died with his work only begun he takes a very high place among them.

## II. SHELLEY

We will come back now to Percy Bysshe Shelley, whom we first saw at school at Eton. He was a tall, slight lad, with a fair complexion, large blue eyes, and soft, curling brown hair. His nature was gentle and loving, but he had fire and strength as well as sweetness. When he took up an idea or a pursuit he did so with an earnestness that cared nothing for the difficulties in the way, or for the consequences that might follow. He was as brave as a lion, and when he saw some wrong that might be put right he was almost as fierce. Especially was he enraged when he saw injustice, or the strong tyrannizing over the weak. At school he tried to organize a rebellion against fagging, and never flinched before the wrath of the elder boys or the laughter of those who thought it ridiculous for one small boy to set himself against the old-established custom of a great school. There had been one particular moment, which he remembered all his life, when he had vowed that he would always be on the side of the weak against the strong. Years afterward he told of this moment in a poem:

I do remember well the hour which burst  
My spirit's sleep; a fresh May-dawn it was,  
When I walked forth upon the glittering grass,  
And wept, I knew not why; until there rose,  
From the near schoolroom, voices, that, alas!  
Were but one echo from a world of woes—  
The harsh and grating voice of tyrants and of foes.

And then I clasped my hands and looked around—  
But none was near to mock my streaming eyes,  
Which poured their warm drops on the sunny ground—  
So, without shame, I spoke:—"I will be wise,



And just, and free, and mild, if in me lies  
Such power, for I grow weary to behold  
The selfish and the strong still tyrannize  
Without reproach or check." I then controlled  
My tears, my heart grew calm, and I was meek and bold.

And from that hour did I with earnest thought  
Heap knowledge from forbidden mines of lore.  
Yet nothing that my tyrants knew or taught  
I cared to learn, but from that secret store  
Wrought linked armour for my soul, before  
It might walk forth to war among mankind;  
Thus power and hope were strengthened more and more  
Within me.

This hatred of tyranny grew with him and led him into many mistakes, and into revolt against all authority, even that which was just and good. We have seen how he thought of his schoolmasters as "my tyrants," and how he called the ordinary sounds that came from a schoolroom where work was going on "the harsh and grating voice of tyrants and of foes." He saw that there was much suffering and misery in the world which laws and religion had not been able to cure. Therefore, he argued, laws and religion, as then established, were of no use and must be overthrown. He had an ardently loving nature that could not bear to see a fellow-creature unhappy, and he was ready always to put his ideas into practice and give up anything he had for the benefit of others. He was too young and inexperienced to understand that reckless generosity and the wild following of every natural impulse are not the best means of making the world better and happier.

In October 1810 he went up to Oxford, and there he met another undergraduate, Thomas Jefferson Hogg, with whom he at once made friends, and who remained his friend long after the two had left the university. Hogg has described Shelley as he was when he first came to Oxford:

His figure was slight and fragile, and yet his bones and joints were large and strong. He was tall, but he stooped so much that he seemed of low stature. His clothes were expensive, and made according to the most approved mode of the day; but they were



tumbled, rumpled, unbrushed. His gestures were abrupt and sometimes violent, occasionally even awkward, yet more frequently gentle and graceful. His complexion was delicate, and almost feminine, of the purest red and white; yet he was tanned and freckled by exposure to the sun, having passed the autumn, as he said, in shooting. His features, his whole face, and particularly his head, were, in fact, unusually small; yet the last appeared of a remarkable bulk, for his hair was long and bushy, and in fits of absence, and in the agonies (if I may use the word) of anxious thought, he often rubbed it fiercely with his hands, or passed his fingers quickly through his locks unconsciously, so that it was singularly wild and rough. . . . His features were not symmetrical (the mouth, perhaps, excepted), yet was the effect of the whole extremely powerful. They breathed an animation, a fire, an enthusiasm, a vivid and preternatural intelligence, that I never met with in any other countenance.

Shelley was very happy at Oxford, though he joined very little in the general life of the university. He and Hogg took no part in the sports and recreations of the other undergraduates. In the afternoons they went for long walks together, and afterward they would go either to Hogg's or to Shelley's room and read until midnight or later. Shelley read enormously. Walking along the street, sitting at meals, lounging in the quadrangle, he was never seen without a book in his hand. But he did not read the books that he ought to have been reading to prepare for his examination; the very fact that these were set by the college authorities made him look on them with distaste. He read the books that pleased himself—books on all sorts of subjects, especially those which dealt with theories of government and religion. As a result of his reading and thinking during the first months of his stay at Oxford he decided that religion was a bad thing for the human race and ought to be given up; and in February 1811 he wrote and published a pamphlet called *The Necessity of Atheism*. It was suppressed after it had been on sale for a few hours, and the outraged dons of the college sent for Shelley and asked him if he was the author. He refused to answer, and was therefore told that he must leave the university. Hogg stood manfully by his friend and defied the authorities to



prove their charge. He also was expelled, and on the morning of March 26 the two left Oxford together.

Shelley's father was a rich and somewhat narrow-minded Sussex gentleman, who had never understood his son's very unusual disposition, and was even more disgusted with what he had done than were the college authorities themselves. He refused to allow Shelley to return home, and for a time the youth of nineteen lived poorly in London, scarcely knowing sometimes where the money was coming from to buy his next meal. But he never thought of changing the opinions that had given such offence, or of withdrawing anything he had said. He cared nothing for money, and his habits were so simple that his needs could be supplied by a very small sum. He was a water-drinker and a vegetarian, and he never thought about food until he grew hungry. Then he would dart into a baker's shop, buy a loaf of bread, and munch it happily as he walked along the street. For clothes he cared equally little; he never wore an overcoat, and seldom wore a hat. When he had money he gave it away with reckless generosity; and as to what people would say about him, that troubled him not at all.

After a time an arrangement was made between Shelley and his father by which the young man was to receive two hundred pounds a year. Very soon afterward he married a girl of sixteen, Harriet Westbrook, who was a schoolfellow of his sisters. She was a beautiful girl, gentle and amiable, of a lower class than his own; and he married her chiefly because he once saw her suffering punishment at school, and believed that she was tyrannized over by an unsympathetic father at home. The two led a wandering life, taking up one scheme after another for making the world better and happier. Harriet did her best to sympathize with Shelley's ideas, but she was not really suited to the life she had to lead, and the marriage was not a happy one.

In 1813 Shelley published his first important poem, *Queen Mab*, which was full of his wild and revolutionary ideas. The



critics called it immoral and blasphemous, and thus Shelley gained the reputation of a dangerous poet, which he never quite lost.

He left England in May 1816 and went to live for a time in Switzerland. Here Lord Byron came to join him, and stayed with him for some months. The sweet and gentle-natured Shelley, so free from any thought of self, so full of enthusiasm for the general good, had a strong influence on the haughty, self-centred, world-weary Byron. "He was," Byron declared, "the most gentle, the most amiable, the least wordly-minded person I ever met. . . . He had formed to himself a *beau idéal* of all that is fine, high-minded, and noble, and he acted up to this ideal even to the very letter."

Shelley never lived in England again. He came home in September 1816, but left again in a little more than a year. Harriet died in December 1816, and Shelley afterward married Mary Godwin, daughter of a famous philosopher and novelist of the day, whose ideas were very much like Shelley's own. He was now receiving, by a new arrangement with his father, an income of £1000 a year, so that he was able to work at his poetry and his schemes without any worry about bread-winning. It was at this time that he made friends with Leigh Hunt and visited his Hampstead house, where he met John Keats. For the next few years he and his wife wandered from one town to another through Northern Italy, seeing a good deal of Byron, and making many new friends. These were the years in which Shelley did his finest work. He wrote a number of long poems, which I shall not describe here, because they are not such as you will care for or understand until you are a good deal older than you are at present. In them Shelley tried to tell of the great ideas for the good of mankind that filled his brain. They are full of the finest and truest poetry, and they show how the wild and rebellious passion of his youth was changing into something wiser, truer, and more splendid.

But it is for his lyrics that Shelley will always be best remembered and best loved. They were written just as the mood and



the place inspired him. One sunny October morning he wandered among the Euganean Hills, and wrote:

'Mid the mountains Euganean  
I stood listening to the pæan  
With which the legion'd rooks did hail  
The sun's uprise majestic. . . .

Beneath is spread like a green sea  
The waveless plain of Lombardy,  
Bounded by the vaporous air,  
Islanded by cities fair;  
Underneath Day's azure eyes,  
Ocean's nursling, Venice lies.

As he looked there rose before him, not only this fair scene, but the vision that had haunted him all his life—the vision of a calm and happy place

Where for me, and those I love,  
May a windless bower be built,  
Far from passion, pain, and guilt,  
In a dell 'mid lawny hills,  
Which the wild sea-murmur fills,  
And soft sunshine, and the sound  
Of old forests echoing round,  
And the light and smell divine  
Of all flowers that breathe and shine.  
We may live so happy there,  
That the Spirits of the Air,  
Envyng us, may ev'n entice  
To our healing Paradise  
The polluting multitude. . . .  
And the love which heals all strife  
Circling, like the breath of life,  
All things in that sweet abode  
With its own mild brotherhood:  
They, not it, would change; and soon  
Every sprite beneath the moon  
Would repent its envy vain,  
And the earth grow young again.

The year 1819 was a great year for Shelley. In it he completed his two great works, *Prometheus Unbound* and *The Cenci*, and he wrote besides some of his most famous lyrics, including the wonderful *Ode to the West Wind*, which begins:

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,  
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead  
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,



## THE LYRISTS

---

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,  
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,  
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,  
Each like a corpse within its grave, until  
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill  
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)  
With living hues and odours plain and hill;

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;  
Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh, hear!

In January 1820 the wanderers found a resting-place at Pisa, and stayed there until April 1822. Various friends gathered round them, and the time passed calmly and happily. Here Shelley wrote the two lyrics which are perhaps the most widely known of all his works—*The Cloud* and the ode *To the Skylark*. The first begins:

I bring fresh showers for the thirsting flowers  
From the seas and the streams;  
I bear light shade for the leaves when laid  
In their noonday dreams.

The second begins:

Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!  
Bird thou never wert,  
That from Heaven, or near it,  
Pourest thy full heart  
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

At Pisa Shelley heard the news of the death of John Keats, and wrote, in memory of his dead friend, the great poem *Adonais*.

In November 1821 Byron came to Pisa, and stayed with the Shelleys for some months. They spent their days sailing on the Arno or wandering about the lovely country, then came home and talked far into the night. For some part of each day Shelley liked to be by himself, and he would wander through a great pine-wood near Pisa with a book and a pencil and paper, reading, or writing down some new poem that was shaping itself in his head. One of his friends tells how one day he found the poet lying under a tree with a paper beside him



on which was scrawled something that "might have been taken for a sketch of a marsh overgrown with bulrushes and the blots for wild ducks," but was really the rough draft of the lyric *Ariel*, to *Miranda* take.

While they were at Pisa both Byron and Shelley had a yacht built for excursions on the sea. Byron's yacht was called the *Bolivar* and Shelley's the *Ariel*. In the *Ariel* Shelley spent a great part of the next summer, when he and his wife had left Pisa for a house at Lerici, on the Gulf of Spezia.

About this time Byron formed a project of publishing a periodical to be called *The Liberal*, and he wrote to Leigh Hunt in England asking him to come out to Pisa and help in the work. Hunt was at this time failing in health and terribly worried by money difficulties. He gladly agreed to Byron's plan, and set sail with his family as soon as he could arrange his affairs in England. Toward the end of June Shelley heard that the Hunts had arrived at Leghorn. Eager to see his old friends, the warm-hearted poet set off at once in the *Ariel* for Leghorn. He saw them established in the rooms reserved for them in the large house Byron had taken at Leghorn, and stayed with them for two days, showing them the sights of the town. Then, with one friend, Williams, and a sailor-boy, he set sail in the *Ariel* to return to Lerici. It was a hot and sultry afternoon, but before the yacht was well out to sea a great tempest suddenly broke, with wind and rain and thunder. It lasted for only twenty minutes, and when it was over friends in the harbour at Leghorn looked out anxiously for the little vessel that had gone out so gaily, but no sign of her could be seen.

For a week the grief-stricken friends searched all along the shore, but found no trace of the lost *Ariel*. On July 18 Shelley's body was cast up near Viareggio. In one pocket of his jacket was a volume of Sophocles, in the other a copy of Keats' poems, "doubled back as if the reader in the act of reading had hastily thrust it away." The bodies of Williams and the sailor-boy were cast up some miles further along the coast.



---

The body of Shelley was temporarily buried in the sand, and then, on August 16, after permission had been obtained from the English Embassy at Florence, a pile was built on the shore and it was burned. Byron and Leigh Hunt, and another friend, Trelawny, were present.

The lonely and grand scenery that surrounded us so exactly harmonized with Shelley's genius, that I could imagine his spirit soaring over us. The sea, with the islands of Gorgona, Capraja, and Elba, was before us; old battlemented watch-towers stretched along the coast, backed by the marble-crested Apennines glistening in the sun, picturesque from their diversified outlines, and not a human dwelling was in sight.<sup>1</sup>

Shelley's ashes were laid in the burial-ground at Rome, near the grave of Keats and that of Shelley's son William, who had died in childhood. On the gravestone Trelawny caused to be inscribed three lines from Ariel's song in *The Tempest*:

Nothing of him that doth fade,  
But doth suffer a sea-change  
Into something rich and strange.

---

<sup>1</sup> Trelawny.



---

## Chapter XXXIII

### THE DOMESTIC NOVEL

**I**N a roomy, old-fashioned house in the small and straggling Hampshire village of Steventon there lived during the last years of the eighteenth century the Reverend Mr Austen, rector of the parish. With him lived his wife and his seven children—five sons and two daughters; and the younger of these daughters was named Jane. She was at the time when the story we are now going to tell begins a slim, graceful girl of twenty, with a bright, intelligent face, a brilliant complexion, and hazel eyes full of fun and laughter, though they could look demure enough at times. The Austens lived a quiet, dignified life in their remote village, but the younger ones took care to have their share in any festivities that were going on in the neighbourhood. The girls—Jane and her sister Cassandra, who was three years older than she—went to balls and garden-parties, and enjoyed them immensely; and Jane's bright eyes noted all the humours and oddities of the company, much as Fanny Burney's had done some twenty years before. Jane was a great admirer of Fanny Burney. She read *Evelina* and *Cecilia* with delight, and when *Camilla* was published in 1796 she paid her guinea and had her name down on the list of subscribers among those of the noble lords and ladies and famous people who were eager to do Mme D'Arblay honour.

It was perhaps the example of Fanny Burney that made Jane think of writing a book herself. She had not nearly as wide an experience as the earlier writer, for at home she saw only her relatives and occasional visitors from the families living round about; and the Hampshire balls and parties were dull compared with the brilliant gatherings in St Martin's Street. But she had a keen eye and a fine though a quiet humour, and she found quite enough material in the small



circle of her friends and acquaintances for the exercise of both of these gifts. She was wise enough not to attempt to write about anything outside her own experience, for she had no great gift of imagination, and if she had attempted a Tale of Terror or a romance after the fashion of Sir Walter Scott she would almost certainly have written nothing that was worth reading. Years afterward, when she had become famous, it was suggested to her that she should write a historical novel dealing with the fortunes of the "august House of Coburg." Jane replied:

I could no more write a romance than an epic poem. I could not sit seriously down to write a serious romance under any other motive than to save my life; and if it were indispensable to me to keep it up, and never relax into laughing at myself or at other people, I am sure I should be hung before I had finished the first chapter.

She had been fond of writing stories even when she was a child, and in the sisters' room upstairs there was a little pile of copybooks containing these early efforts. At the time of which we have been speaking she had lately begun another, a really serious attempt to paint the people she saw around her every day—the country squires, with their wives and daughters, the clergymen, the fine ladies, the dashing young officers, and the well-to-do townsfolk who came to her father's church on Sundays or met her in the weekday festivities. She called this story *First Impressions*, which was afterward altered to *Pride and Prejudice*. Nobody, except Cassandra, knew that she was writing it, for, in spite of Fanny Burney, it was still considered not quite the proper thing for a well-born girl to become a writer. So Jane took her sheets of paper to the writing-table in the corner of the drawing-room, where she was accustomed to sit and read, or to write the long letters which young ladies did write in those days to their absent friends. There, in the few half-hours she could get to herself during the day, she went on steadily with her story; and in the evenings, when the family was gathered in the room and everyone was laughing and chatting, or reading and



doing needlework, she managed to write a little more. If anyone came near the table the story disappeared under a sheet of blotting-paper and a letter came to the top; and for a long time nobody guessed how Jane was amusing herself.

The story is about a well-to-do family called Bennett, who live in a comfortable house near a country town. There is a very silly mother and a clever, bookish father, who sees the harm that is being done by his wife's want of sense, but is too indolent to try to put things right, and contents himself with making jokes at Mrs Bennett's expense. There are five daughters—Jane, the eldest, who is sensible, sweet-tempered, and a beauty; Elizabeth, who is clever, lively, and has a witty tongue (very much like Jane Austen herself, we imagine); next, a plain daughter, Mary, who tries to make up for her want of beauty by pretending to be very accomplished and learned, though really she is almost as silly as her mother; then Lydia, big and bouncing and vulgar and moderately pretty, with a head that has nothing in it except thoughts of lovers and parties and what she calls fun; and Kitty, who is a pale copy of Lydia. The story is chiefly concerned with the mother's efforts to marry off her daughters, and the troubles which fall upon the two elder ones through the vulgarity of the rest. Nothing very exciting happens, and the life described is the ordinary life of middle-class people. Yet there is not a dull page in the book. Every character is real and living, and the most commonplace people become interesting when Miss Austen shows them to us. Readers do not laugh out loud as they read Miss Austen's stories, but they are kept quietly smiling nearly all the time.

By the time the story was finished the secret of Jane's writing had become known to the family. Her father read the manuscript, and thought so well of it that in 1797 he offered it to a London publisher. But the publisher refused it, so it was put aside, and Miss Austen took out one of her earlier sketches, called *Eleanor and Marianne*, and began to re-write it. It had been written originally in the form of letters,



following the example of Richardson and Fanny Burney. Now Miss Austen altered it to direct narrative, added to it, and called it *Sense and Sensibility*. This also was put aside, and a third novel begun, which was not finished until 1803.

By this time the Austen family had left Steventon Rectory and had settled at Bath, Mr Austen having given up his living to his eldest son. Bath was at this time a place where fashionable people went each year to drink the waters, and during the season it was very gay with balls and assemblies and concerts almost every night of the week. Jane had visited it several times, and had laid the scene of her new story at Bath. When it was first proposed that the family should go and live there she was in despair at the idea of leaving Steventon and all her friends, but very soon she came to look upon the plan more favourably. Writing to her sister, who was away on a visit, she said:

I get more and more reconciled to the idea of our removal. We have lived long enough in this neighbourhood; the Basingstoke balls are certainly on the decline; there is something interesting in the bustle in going away, and the prospect of spending future summers by the sea or in Wales is very delightful.

The family settled at a house in Sydney Place, which now bears a tablet with the inscription, "Here lived Jane Austen from 1801 to 1805." Here she finished her third novel, which she called *Northanger Abbey*. It is the one among all her works which young people generally like best. Its heroine is Catherine Morland, the daughter of a country clergyman. "No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy would have supposed her born to be a heroine," begins Miss Austen, and goes on to show how Catherine was in everything quite commonplace. She was neither rich nor poor, neither very high nor very lowly in position. She was one of a family of ten children, all of them very like herself. She was not beautiful, for "she had a thin, awkward figure, a sallow skin without colour, dark, lank hair, and strong features." She was not clever and she was not stupid. She had no taste for



music, and little for drawing. She loved games better than lessons, and boys' games best of all.

She had neither a bad heart nor a bad temper; was seldom stubborn, scarcely ever quarrelsome, and very kind to the little ones, with few interruptions of tyranny. She was, moreover, noisy and wild, hated confinement and cleanliness, and loved nothing so well in the world as rolling down the green slope at the back of the house.

Such was Catherine Morland at ten. At fifteen, appearances were mending: she began to curl her hair and long for balls, her complexion improved, her features were softened by plumpness and colour, her eyes gained more animation, and her figure more consequence. Her love of dirt gave way to an inclination to finery, and she grew clean as she grew smart; she had now the pleasure of sometimes hearing her father and mother remark on her personal improvement. "Catherine grows quite a good-looking girl; she is almost pretty to-day," were words which caught her ears now and then; and how welcome were the sounds!

She still preferred

"cricket, baseball, riding on horseback, and running about the country . . . to books, or, at least, books of information; for, provided that nothing like useful knowledge could be gained from them, provided they were all story and no reflection, she had never any objection to books at all."

When she was seventeen a rich neighbour called Mr Allen was ordered to Bath for his gout, and as he and his wife were fond of Catherine and had no daughters of their own they offered to take her with them. So Catherine went to Bath, and there her adventures began. First of all she met a young lady called Isabel Thorpe, about her own age, the daughter of a friend of Mrs Allen's, with whom she swore eternal friendship; and this young lady introduced her to the delights of the 'horrid' novels, so that she was thrilled with *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. When they met one morning Isabel asked Catherine:

"Have you gone on with *Udolpho*?"

"Yes, I have been reading it ever since I woke; and I am got to the black veil."

"Are you indeed! How delightful! Oh, I would not tell you what is behind the black veil for the world! Are you not wild to know?"



“ Oh! yes, quite; what can it be? But do not tell me. I would not be told upon any account. I know it must be a skeleton; I am sure it is *Laurentina's* skeleton. Oh! I am delighted with the book! I should like to spend my whole life in reading it, I assure you; if it had not been to meet you, I would not have come away from it for the world.”

“ Dear creature! how much I am obliged to you; and when you have finished *Udolpho* we will read *The Italian* together; and I have made out a list of ten or twelve more of the same kind for you.”

“ Have you indeed! How glad I am! What are they all?”

“ I will read you their names directly. Here they are, in my pocket-book. *Castle of Wolfenbach*, *Clermont*, *Mysterious Warnings*, *Necromancer of the Black Forest*, *Midnight Bell*, *Orphan of the Rhine*, and *Horrid Mysteries*. Those will last us some time.”

“ Yes, pretty well; but are they all horrid? are you sure they are all horrid?”

“ Yes, quite sure; for a particular friend of mine—a Miss Andrews—a sweet girl, one of the sweetest creatures in the world, has read every one of them. I wish you knew Miss Andrews; you would be delighted with her. She is netting herself the sweetest cloak you can conceive.”

Besides finding a bosom friend at Bath, Catherine finds a lover. He is a young clergyman, Henry Tilney, the son of General Tilney, of Northanger Abbey. Catherine is invited to stay at the Abbey, and she goes, with her head full of the ‘horrid’ romances she has been reading. She looks forward to finding mystery and horror and marvels at the Abbey, and she imagines she has found them, though really all the things that puzzle her have very simple and natural explanations. Her suspicions get her into grievous trouble and disgrace, but her simplicity and candour bring her out of them again, and all ends happily.

In 1805 Jane Austen's father died, and at the end of the year she, with her sister Cassandra and her mother, went to live at Southampton, near her brother Frank and his wife. Here they stayed until 1809, when they moved to a cottage near Winchester. All this time Jane had written no more novels, though she had begun one, called *The Watsons*, which was never finished. Before she left Bath she had offered *Northanger Abbey* to a bookseller, and he had given her ten pounds



for it. Probably, seeing it was all about Bath, he had thought it might have a sale in the town, but on looking further into it he seems to have changed his mind. He kept it unpublished and unnoticed for thirteen years.

Back again in the familiar country where she had spent her youth, Jane's love of writing seems to have revived. She was as lively and high-spirited as ever, and a great favourite with all her nieces, who rejoiced when Aunt Jane came to pay them a visit. One of these nieces has given an amusing account of how Miss Austen wrote her books while she was staying at her brother's house:

Aunt Jane would sit very quietly at work beside the fire in the Godmersham library, then suddenly burst out laughing, jump up, cross the room to a distant table with papers lying upon it, write something down, returning presently and sitting down quietly to her work again.

She also remembered how her aunt

would take the elder girls into an upstairs-room and read to them something that produced peals of laughter, to which the little ones on the wrong side of the door listened, thinking it very hard that they should be shut out from what was so delightful.

In 1811 Miss Austen published at her own expense *Sense and Sensibility*, which she had written thirteen years before; and though it did not make a great sensation, such as *Childe Harold* and *Waverley* were to make, it had a modest success. There were a good many people ready to welcome it. There were those who were tired of the 'horrid' stories, and there were those who had read Wordsworth's poems and had learned from him to see beauty and interest in ordinary things. There were the people whose taste had been cultivated by the critical journals, and who had learned to delight in a book where the words were so happily chosen, the sentences so finely turned, the scenes so aptly described, as they were in *Sense and Sensibility*. The title-page of the book simply said, "By a Lady," but all Jane's friends knew that she had written it, and she made no attempt to keep the authorship a secret.



Encouraged by her success, she worked hard at her fourth novel, which she called *Mansfield Park*. In 1813 a bookseller was found who was willing to publish *Pride and Prejudice* at his own risk. Jane was very excited about the appearance of this, her first and her best-loved work. When she received a copy from the bookseller she was full of pride and delight. "I want to tell you," she wrote to Cassandra, "that I have got my own darling child from London." A little later she wrote again:

Miss B. dined with us on the very day of the book's coming, and in the evening we fairly set at it, and read half the first volume to her. . . . She was amused, poor soul! *That* she could not help, you know, with two such people to lead the way, but she really does seem to admire Elizabeth. I must confess that I think her as delightful a creature as ever appeared in print, and how I shall be able to tolerate those who do not like her, at least, I do not know. . . . Upon the whole, I am quite vain enough and quite satisfied enough.

All Jane's characters were as real to her as the people she saw and talked with every day. She had written her books slowly and with loving delight, and as, one after another, the characters that her imagination had formed came to life in the story she felt that they had actually come into the world to take their part in what was going on there. She did not feel that their careers had come to an end when the book was finished, but imagined them going on and living their lives just as our friends do, even though we have said good-bye to them and see them no more. In 1813, when she was staying with her brother in London, she went to an exhibition of the pictures of Sir Joshua Reynolds, and she told her sister that she had looked to see if there was a picture of Elizabeth Bennett (who had married and become Mrs Darcy at the end of *Pride and Prejudice*) among them, but could not find one. "I can only imagine," she said, "that Darcy prizes any picture of her too much to like it should be exposed to the public eye. I can imagine he would have that sort of feeling—that mixture of love, pride, and delicacy." She found, however, a picture which she at once recognized as that of Elizabeth's sister Jane,



who had become Mrs Bingley. "Mrs Bingley is exactly herself—size, shaped face, features, and sweetness; there never was a greater likeness. She is dressed in a white gown with green ornaments, which convinces me of what I had always supposed, that green was a favourite colour with her."

Between 1813 and 1816 Miss Austen wrote her last two novels, *Emma* and *Persuasion*. This last work has a tenderness and feeling not to be found in the earlier books, though it has the same quiet, delightful humour that they have. *Northanger Abbey* was bought back from the Bath bookseller—who had no idea until he had sold it that it was the work of the Miss Austen who had now become famous—for the same sum that he had given for it, and was published a few months after her death, which took place in July 1817. Her last illness was a long and painful one, but through it all she never lost her cheerfulness and her high spirits, and was always ready with a smile and bright words for her sister Cassandra, who nursed her devotedly, and for the nieces, who were dismayed at the idea of losing Aunt Jane. She was buried in Winchester Cathedral.

It was only slowly that Miss Austen came to be known and appreciated by more than a small and very select class of readers, so that, although her first book was published before *Waverley*, her fame has run very far behind that of the great Sir Walter. But it has grown steadily as the years have passed, and to-day it stands higher than it has ever done before.



---

## *Chapter XXXIV*

### THE GREAT VICTORIANS

#### INTRODUCTORY

**W**E talk sometimes about the literature of a certain reign as if when one king died and another took his place there must necessarily be a change in the kind of books written in the country. Often this is quite wrong and no change at all occurs; but sometimes it is quite right and we find that the literature of a certain reign does show marked and unmistakable differences from that of any other. So it was in the days of Elizabeth; and so it was in the days of Victoria, to which we have now come.

In 1837, when Victoria came to the throne, the Romantic movement, which began about the time of the French Revolution, had nearly died out. Most of the great Romantic writers—Byron and Scott, Shelley, Keats, Lamb, and Hazlitt—were dead; only Wordsworth and De Quincey remained, and they had long ago done their best work. No new school of writers had taken their place, though one was growing up; Dickens, Thackeray, Carlyle, Tennyson, and Browning had begun to write, though not much of their work had been published. These were the writers who were to form the new school, and all of them did their best work during the reign of Victoria, so that we may fairly talk about the Victorian epoch as standing out from that which had gone before and having a character of its own.

The character of the books written at this period was—as we have seen has been the case all through our history—decided to a very large extent by the character of the times. The country was not in a prosperous or a happy state. There was a great deal of poverty and distress. England had not yet



recovered from the effects of the long war against Napoleon, which had brought almost as many difficulties in its train as the Great War has brought in our own day. Also, there was a great deal of folly and wild living among the highest class in the country. George IV had set his people a bad example, and William IV, though he was a well-meaning king, had not been strong enough to put things straight.

There were many people in the country who saw all these evils and were eager to cure them. The philanthropic movement that had begun about the time of the Wesleys had been gathering strength ever since, and when Victoria came to the throne there were a greater number of people than there had ever been before who were keenly interested in the welfare of the poor and the unfortunate. Various attempts were being made, in Parliament and out of Parliament, to remedy injustices and abuses. Societies were being formed and charities started. All sorts of schemes were in the air, and there was a widespread if rather vague notion that the time had come when something ought to be done. But so far the great mass of the people had not bestirred themselves to take an active part in the work; and so a group of writers of the day set themselves to show as plainly as they could the terrible things that were going on in the factories and the industrial towns, in the schools and workhouses and prisons, and in the courts and alleys of the great cities. They hoped that by doing so they might fill their readers with the passion of pity and righteous anger by which they themselves were moved, and might shock and goad them into doing something to help make things better.

Chief among this group was Charles Dickens. Perhaps you are more used to thinking of Dickens as a great humorist, a man who made the world laugh. He was, indeed, one of our greatest humorists and one of our greatest story-tellers, a man in whose genius we all delight. But he was a reformer too, and he himself thought that his work as a reformer was the most important that he did. He was the friend of all who were



oppressed and unhappy, and spoke out boldly in their cause. So too did many other eminent novelists—Benjamin Disraeli and Charles Kingsley and Mrs Gaskell among them. But we have not enough space to speak of all these writers here, and so we will take Charles Dickens as representing the class.

There were other novelists who did not directly attack the abuses of the time, yet who showed in their works that they too felt the influence of this new spirit which was leading those who were fortunate in the world to think of their less happy brothers. Thackeray is often called a cynic—which means a man who has little faith in the goodness or the sincerity of his fellow-men—because he exposed the shams and meannesses of those people who try to keep up a great show before their neighbours and to belong to what is called “Society.” But he was always very tender to the simple and the sincere, whether they were poor or rich. It was real worth that he revered, not money or position, and he hated pretence of any kind. We shall see when we come to talk about his books how he too, in his way, upheld the cause of the poor and the unfortunate.

George Eliot told her tales of simple folks, and made us honour them. Charlotte Brontë showed how insignificant people suffer at the hands of those who think themselves their superiors. All of them had a wider outlook than Jane Austen, and a wider sympathy. The twenty years that had passed since her death had been years of growth and development.

The Victorian age was one when great advances were made in science, and all sorts of marvels were being put before an interested and slightly bewildered public. It seemed to many people that the old order of things was changing, and that all they had believed in and loved in the past was being proved to be wrong or of little value in the light of these great discoveries. They were troubled and unhappy, and it was here that the poets and the prophets of the day—Tennyson, Browning, Carlyle, Ruskin, Arnold, and others—helped and comforted them. These showed people that, though many things may change, the great truths on which faith is founded



remain the same, that there are certain plain rules and principles which have guided man in the beginning and can guide him to the end.

In many other ways the books written at this time met the needs of the generation. The hurry and bustle of life seemed suddenly to have increased, and the old quiet and leisure to have disappeared. To us, looking back, those times may seem to be slow and even dull, but they really mark a great stage in the advance toward rapid movement and quick accomplishment which the invention of machinery had made possible, and which has gone on, at an increasing pace, to our own day. The writers of that age gave what it is the duty and the privilege of the writers of all ages to give—quiet breathing places, which helped men to stop and think, to look on the beauty of the world and take a lesson from the unhurried working of nature, to see God even among the turmoil of the factory and the rush of the city streets.

The years went on, and the 1850's came, and some of the troubles that had vexed England at the beginning of Victoria's reign vexed her no longer. The country was prosperous. Its industries were flourishing, its standing among the nations of the world was growing higher and higher. The example of the young Queen had done much to purify the manners and the way of living of her people. The spirit of optimism was strengthening; men were proud of their country and hopeful of its future. A later age has sneered at them for this high confidence and called it insular conceit, just as they sneered at the strictness of domestic manners and called it self-righteousness. There is some truth in both of these charges, but none the less our Victorian ancestors were men of strong character and sound sense, with a high standard of conduct and an active benevolence that set itself to cure England of the ills from which she was suffering. It has been the fashion for a good many years to make fun of them as being prudish and narrow and self-satisfied, though the fashion is now passing. On the surface they may appear to have been all these things, but



they thought deeply and seriously; they opened their minds to new ideas; they concerned themselves with great questions; and they got the great literature that they deserved.

## I. THE NOVELISTS

### (a) *Charles Dickens, the Reformer*

Most of you, I expect, have read *David Copperfield*, and if you have read that you know a good deal about the boyhood of Charles Dickens. Not all that is told in the book is true of its author. Dickens's father did not die until he was a grown man; his mother was very different from gentle, childish Mrs Copperfield. He had no aunt like the delightful Betsy Trotwood, and no faithful nurse like the red-armed Peggotty. But in character and disposition David is Charles Dickens himself, and some of the incidents of the story are accounts of what really and truly happened. Dickens was actually sent to work when he was eleven years old, though it was at a blacking factory, not at a wine-merchant's as in *David Copperfield*. His father was easy-tempered, kindly, and improvident, with the same hopeful disposition as Mr Micawber, and the same trust that something would soon "turn up" that would lift him out of all his difficulties and make him a prosperous man. Nothing did turn up, and the difficulties ended in his being arrested for debt and sent to the Marshalsea Prison, where his family, according to the custom of that time, went to live with him; all except poor little Charles, who was sent to the blacking factory. His lodging, at the house of an old woman who had several other children under her care, was paid for by his father; occasionally some new article of clothing was given to him; and on Sundays he had dinner with the rest of the family in the prison. Everything else that he needed had to come out of the six shillings a week that he earned. "I know," he said, when, years afterward, he wrote an account of this time for his friend, John Forster,



I do not exaggerate, unconsciously or unintentionally, the scantiness of my resources and the difficulties of my life. I know that if a shilling or so were given me by anyone, I spent it in a dinner or a tea. I know that I worked from morning to night, with common men and boys, a shabby child. I know that I tried, but ineffectually, not to anticipate my money, and to make it last the week through by putting it away in a drawer I had in the counting-house, wrapped into six little parcels, each parcel containing the same amount, and labelled with a different day. I know that I have lounged about the streets, insufficiently and unsatisfactorily fed. I know that, but for the mercy of God, I might easily have been, for any care that was taken of me, a little robber or a little vagabond.

Dickens did not run away from his drudgery, as David did. His release came in a different fashion. After some time a piece of good fortune came to his father. A sum of money was left to him, not a very large sum, but enough to enable him to make an arrangement with his creditors, gain his release from prison, and start afresh outside. Soon afterward he quarrelled with the relative to whom the blacking factory belonged, and, in his anger, took his son away from his employment there at once.

After his release from the blacking factory Charles Dickens went to a school near his home for two years, and when he left school he became a lawyer's clerk. He was very ambitious, and ready for any amount of hard work if only he might win for himself a position in the world. He knew that the education he had received was poor and insufficient, and he studied hard to make up for the wasted years of his boyhood. He learned shorthand, and decided that to obtain a perfect knowledge of this art is "about equal in difficulty to the mastery of six languages." Like David Copperfield he became a reporter for the newspapers, and did his work well and thoroughly.

His secret ambition all this time was to become an author, and he tells us how one evening he dropped, "with fear and trembling, a paper addressed to the old *Monthly Magazine* into a dark letter-box in a dark office in a dark court up Fleet Street"; and he tells also of the joy he felt when he saw his



contribution in print. "I walked down to Westminster Hall and turned into it for half an hour, because my eyes were so dimmed with joy and pride, that they could not bear the street, and were not fit to be seen there."

The article that had been accepted was called *A Dinner at Poplar Walk*, and it was the first of a number of sketches which were afterward collected and published with the title *Sketches by Boz*. (Boz was the pen-name under which Dickens's first works were written.) They were read and praised, and Dickens, at the age of twenty-four, became, not exactly famous, but known among editors and publishers and literary people generally as a promising young writer who might do great things by and by.

Before long his chance came to him. A certain firm of publishers had employed a Mr Seymour, who was a well-known and popular illustrator of books, to draw a number of sketches dealing with the adventures of a group of Cockney sportsmen. They wanted someone to write a sort of story bringing in the incidents shown in the sketches. They asked Dickens if he would do this, and he said yes. And so *The Pickwick Papers* came to be written.

Before the second number appeared Seymour's death compelled the publishers to make a fresh arrangement. A new artist, Hablot Knight Browne, was found, and now it was the writer who gave the ideas to the artist, instead of the other way about. The first four numbers were fairly popular, but some critics declared that Dickens could not possibly keep up the fun and high spirits of the story to the end. His reply was to introduce the immortal and inimitable Sam Weller, one of the greatest humorous characters in English fiction. All the Pickwickian people were overflowing with life, from Mr Pickwick himself, the "bespectacled angel," to the serious gentleman with the red hair and the carpet-bag who went to Ipswich to offer his hand and heart to the elderly maiden lady. Very soon the poetical Mr Snodgrass, the would-be sportsman, Mr Winkle, the fat and flirtatious Tracy Tupman, the actor-



swindler, Alfred Jingle, were taken to the hearts of the reading public, and the fortune of their creator was made. Though he was first and foremost a humorist, Dickens had a heart keenly alive to the pain and suffering that he saw all round him. In *The Pickwick Papers* he showed the miseries of a debtor's prison; who should know them better than he, a prisoner's child? In his next book, *Oliver Twist*, he told the story of a boy born and brought up in a workhouse, who was bound apprentice to a cruel master, ran away to London, fell in with a gang of criminals, and was finally rescued and made happy. He painted a vivid picture of the cold and meagre workhouse atmosphere, of the bullying beadle, Mr Bumble, and of the brutality of masters to their workhouse-born apprentices. The scene in which poor Oliver, rendered bold by hunger, ventures to ask Mr Bumble for some more gruel has become classical, and the word 'Bumbledom,' to indicate the petty tyranny and needless elaborations of certain official types, has passed into our language. There are streaks of humour in *Oliver Twist*, but the general tone of the book is dark and grim.

After this Dickens went on from one triumph to another. All his works were published in monthly or weekly parts, and his readers all over England could scarcely wait for the next part to appear, and seized upon it when it came with almost wild delight. *Nicholas Nickleby* followed *Oliver Twist*, and was an immense improvement on it. It has that mixture of comedy and tragedy—*The Pickwick Papers* and *Oliver Twist* in one—which is to be found in almost all Dickens's later work. It attacked the disgraceful schools which were common all over the country, but especially in Yorkshire, where children who were not wanted, but for whom some provision must be made, could be sent with the certainty of getting them safely and cheaply out of the way. Friendless orphans, and the neglected children of unloving parents, and all kinds of unhappy little waifs who had no one to care for them were to be found in these schools. The schools were kept by brutal and ignorant men, who charged very low fees, but spent only a very small



portion even of these on their unhappy charges. The children were neglected, half-starved, and ill-treated, and if they died it did not matter very much to anybody. Such a school was Dotheboys Hall in *Nicholas Nickleby*. Dickens told of its horrors in such terms that the whole country was moved.

He did not, however, as he had done in *Oliver Twist*, make the attack on abuses overshadow the whole book. Even at Dotheboys Hall there is a great deal at which we can laugh heartily. Wackford Squeers, the proprietor, and his family have a humorous as well as a grim side. No one could help laughing at Miss Fanny Squeers as, dressed up for a tea-party, she sidles up to poor Nicholas Nickleby (who has been sent to Dotheboys Hall as an usher by his uncle, who wishes to get him out of the way),

with her hair—it had more than a tinge of red and she wore it in a crop—curled in five distinct rows up to the very top of her head, and arranged dexterously over the doubtful eye; to say nothing of the blue sash that floated down her back, or the worked apron, or the long gloves, or the green gauze scarf, worn over one shoulder and under the other; or any of the numerous devices which were to be as so many arrows in the heart of Nicholas;

or again when, later in the story, all her charms having failed to win that heart, she denounces Nicholas as “an assassinating thief that shed the gore of my pa,” one whom she “couldn’t condescend to touch with kitchen tongs, without blacking and crocking myself by the contract.” We are very sorry when she at length leaves “such society with my pa for hever,” and vanishes from the book.

Then there is Mrs Nickleby, with her curious and delightful flow of talk, to whom it is a joy to listen.

“Kate, my dear,” said Mrs Nickleby, “I don’t know how it is, but a fine, warm summer day like this, with the birds singing in every direction, always puts me in mind of roast pig, with sage and onion sauce and made gravy.”

“That’s a curious association of ideas, is it not, mamma?”

“Upon my word, my dear, I don’t know,” replied Mrs Nickleby. “Roast pig, let me see. On the day five weeks after you were christened we had a roast—no, that couldn’t have been a pig,



either, because I recollect there were a pair of them to carve, and your poor papa and I could never have thought of sitting down to two pigs—they must have been partridges. Roast pig! I hardly think we ever could have had one, now I come to remember, for your papa could never bear the sight of them in the shops, and used to say that they put him in mind of very little babies, only the pigs had much fairer complexions; and he had a horror of little babies too, because he couldn't very well afford any increase to his family, and had a natural dislike to the subject. It's very odd, now, what could have put that into my head. I recollect dining once at Mrs Bevan's, in that broad street round the corner by the coachmaker's, where the tipsy man fell through the cellar flap of an empty house, nearly a week before quarter-day, and was not found until the new tenant went in—and we had roast pig there. It must be that, I think, that reminds me of it, especially as there was a little bird in the room that would keep on singing all the time of dinner—at least, not a little bird, for it was a parrot, and he didn't sing exactly, for he talked and swore dreadfully; but I think it must be that; indeed, I am sure it must. Shouldn't you say so, my dear? ”

“ I should say there was not a doubt about it, mamma,” returned Kate with a cheerful smile.

“ No, but *do* you think so, Kate? ” said Mrs Nickleby, with as much gravity as if it were a question of the most imminent and thrilling interest. “ If you don't, say so at once, you know, because it's just as well to be correct, particularly on a point of this kind, and worth settling while one thinks about it.”

Next came *The Old Curiosity Shop*, with Little Nell, and Sally Brass, and Quilp, and Dick Swiveller, and the Marchioness to add to the portraits that Dickens had given to his readers' picture-gallery. Little Nell has been called a sentimentalized, over-saintly, and altogether impossible child, and it is true that nobody, probably, has known a child at all like her. Yet the readers of Dickens's own day loved her dearly, and were heart-broken at her early death. Dickens himself loved her, and on the day when he was obliged, as he said, to kill her he suffered terribly, almost as if he had lost a real, living friend. His description of her death has drawn tears from hundreds of readers:

For she was dead. There, upon her little bed, she lay at rest. The solemn stillness was no marvel now.

She was dead. No sleep so beautiful and calm, so free from trace



of pain, so fair to look upon. She seemed a creature fresh from the hand of God, and waiting for the breath of life; not one who had lived and suffered death.

Her couch was dressed with here and there some winter berries and green leaves, gathered in a spot she had been used to favour. "When I die, put near me something that has loved the light, and had the sky above it always." Those were her words.

She was dead. Dear, gentle, patient, noble Nell was dead. Her little bird—a poor slight thing the pressure of a finger would have crushed—was stirring nimbly in its cage; and the strong heart of its child-mistress was mute and motionless for ever.

Where were the traces of her early cares, her sufferings, and fatigues? All gone. Sorrow was dead indeed in her, but peace and perfect happiness were born; imaged in her tranquil beauty and profound repose. . . .

She was dead, and past all help, or need of it. The ancient rooms she had seemed to fill with life, even while her own was waning fast—the garden she had tended—the eyes she had gladdened—the noiseless haunts of many a thoughtful hour—the paths she had trodden as it were but yesterday—could know her no more.

*Barnaby Rudge*, a story of the Gordon Riots of 1780, followed in 1841; and then in 1843 came *Martin Chuzzlewit*, which gave us the immortal Pecksniff, Tom Pinch, Mark Tapley, and Mrs Gamp. In none of his books does Dickens wage his war against abuses so entirely without bitterness as he does here. Mrs Gamp is one of the most despicable of creatures. She is a nurse, who sees in her patients only a means of making money; a drunken, idle, ignorant, lying, fawning, cruel old woman. If we found her in the sick-room of anyone we cared for we should take her by the shoulders in horror and put her outside. Yet when we read the book we do not hate her: we laugh at her. There are no parts of *Martin Chuzzlewit* that we enjoy more than those that tell of Sairey Gamp and her friend Betsey Prig, and the two worthless old women are remembered with delight by all who have read about them. Yet, none the less, Dickens's attack on the nurses of the day was successful. It gave enormous help to the reform of the nursing profession that was being carried on by Florence Nightingale, and it is largely due to Charles Dickens that there are now no more Sairey Gamps and Betsey Prigs.



In the same year came the first of the *Christmas Books*—stories which Dickens wrote for publication on five successive Christmases. It is called *The Christmas Carol*, and is almost the best known of all Dickens's works. He himself described it as "a whimsical kind of masque, intended to awaken loving and forbearing thoughts"; and it certainly fulfils its purpose. All of you, I expect, know old Scrooge, and Marley's Ghost, and Bob Cratchit, and Tiny Tim; and all of you have enjoyed the passage about the Cratchits' Christmas pudding. Here it is, that you may enjoy it once more:

Mrs Cratchit left the room alone—too nervous to bear witnesses—to take the pudding up and bring it in.

Suppose it should not be done enough! Suppose it should break in turning out! Suppose somebody should have got over the wall of the back-yard, and stolen it, while they were merry with the goose—a supposition at which the two young Cratchits became livid! All sorts of horrors were supposed.

Hallo! A great deal of steam! The pudding was out of the copper. A smell like a washing-day! That was the cloth. A smell like an eating-house and a pastrycook's next door to each other, with a laundress's next door to that! That was the pudding! In half a minute Mrs Cratchit entered—flushed, but smiling proudly—with the pudding like a speckled cannon-ball, so hard and firm, blazing in half of half-a-quartern of ignited brandy, and bedight with Christmas holly stuck into the top.

Oh, a wonderful pudding! Bob Cratchit said, and calmly too, that he regarded it as the greatest success achieved by Mrs Cratchit since their marriage. Mrs Cratchit said that now the weight was off her mind, she would confess she had had her doubts about the quantity of flour. Everybody had something to say about it, and nobody said or thought that it was at all a small pudding for a large family. It would have been flat heresy to do so. Any Cratchit would have blushed to hint at such a thing.

In 1848 Dickens published *Dombey and Son*, and in 1849 *David Copperfield*. "It will easily be believed," he wrote, some years later, "that I am a fond parent to every child of my fancy, and that none can ever love that family as dearly as I love them. But, like many fond parents, I have in my heart of hearts a favourite child—and his name is David Copperfield." Many of his readers would agree with him in this. *David*



---

*Copperfield* is their favourite among the fifteen novels that Dickens wrote. It is, as has been said, to some extent founded on his own life—especially the early part. Mr Micawber is an exaggerated portrait of his father. Dora is his first love, whom he did not marry. The story of his career as a reporter and an author is told in the story of David.

With *David Copperfield* Dickens reached the height of his fame. He wrote seven more novels, but these, except perhaps *A Tale of Two Cities* and *Great Expectations*, are not quite equal to his earlier works. His life after his troubled childhood was prosperous and uneventful. He had an inexhaustible supply of energy, and his writing was only one of the many occupations that filled his busy days. He was almost as good an actor as he was a writer—he had, indeed, thought seriously of becoming an actor by profession. From 1847 to 1852 he was the stage-manager of an amateur theatrical company that acted in Manchester, Liverpool, and London, had the honour of performing before Queen Victoria, and gathered in large sums for various charities. He was a good speaker, and was constantly being asked to speak at public meetings on behalf of charitable institutions, and he was always ready to give what help he could in this way. In 1849 he founded and edited a periodical called *Household Words*, to which he contributed regularly. He had many friends, and he enjoyed all sorts of social gatherings and parties with the zest of a boy. Often his nights would be spent in tramping about the London streets, watching the life of the great city in the midnight hours, and learning how the poor and the homeless spent the hours of darkness; and yet next morning he would be ready, bright and early, for a gallop on horseback with one of his friends, and for another busy day, crammed with fun and laughter and hard work and deeds of kindness.

About 1858 he began to give public readings from his works, and these were so enormously successful that he travelled all over England, giving readings in one town after another. In 1867 he went to America, which he had visited already in



1842, and repeated the readings there, drawing great crowds wherever he went. His tours brought him very large sums of money, but they brought, too, fatigue and excitement that seriously injured his health, and led to a complete breakdown.

On March 15, 1870, the farewell reading was given in St James's Hall. There were scenes of great enthusiasm, which severely tried the exhausted reader, and he withdrew to his house at Gad's Hill, near Rochester, for complete rest. He had bought the house twelve years before. It was the very house, he tells us, that he had looked at often when he was "a very queer small boy" of nine, and had determined that one day he would possess. Here, on June 9, he died quite suddenly, after having worked all the morning at a novel he was writing, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*.

He was mourned, in England and in America, as public men are seldom mourned by those who know them only by their works. His readers felt that they had lost a personal friend. The story of the ragged market-girl at Covent Garden who, when told that Dickens was dead, cried, "Will Father Christmas die too, then?" tells something of the way Dickens was regarded by a large number of his countrymen. He had done much, by his writings, to revive the keeping of Christmas as a great national home festival, and he stood, in the minds of his readers, for all those feelings that are associated with Christmas—goodwill and mirth and kindliness and home affection, and the reaching out of hands toward poorer brethren.

(b) *William Makepeace Thackeray, Hater of Shams*

In the year 1817 a little boy of six, called William Makepeace Thackeray, was brought by his widowed mother to Calcutta, and put on board a ship bound for England. He had no one to take care of him on the voyage except a native servant; and the child felt sad and lonely, for he had left all his friends behind him in India, and was going to relatives of whom he knew nothing. He cheered up as the voyage went



on, and began to take an interest in the things around him. He remembered all his life how, when the ship touched at St Helena, his servant pointed out to him the figure of a man, short and sturdy, walking in a garden near the shore. This was the great Napoleon Bonaparte, the man with whose name nurses, in India as well as in Europe, had been used for many years to frighten their charges, telling them to be good, or Boney would get them. He did not look so very terrible now he was a prisoner, and the little boy was not frightened of him at all.

When he got to England little William Makepeace Thackeray thought it a sad and a dull place compared to India. Princess Charlotte had lately died, and the country was in mourning for her, so it was not showing its brightest face. However, his English relatives were kind, and his home was comfortable, and soon the boy began to feel at home. He went to a preparatory school for a time, and when he was eleven he was sent to the Charterhouse. He enjoyed his school life, but he was not a model pupil. As he said later of the hero of one of his books, he was "averse to the Greek Grammar from his earliest youth and would have none of it, except at the last extremity." He tells us how he used to read Scott's novels when he ought to have been studying, and how, when he was found out, he was soundly cuffed. He could draw well, and he used to delight his schoolfellows with his caricatures, especially those of the masters; and he could make verses and parodies which the other boys considered very clever.

When Thackeray left the Charterhouse he went to Cambridge, where there was at that time a famous little group of undergraduates, of whom we shall have something to say in a later section. He was idle at the university as he had been idle at school, and he read only the books that pleased and interested him, leaving the duller studies alone. He wrote rhymes and parodies, which were published in the university papers, and which made him famous among his fellows; but he gained little credit with the authorities, and in June 1830 he left Cambridge without taking a degree.



He had made up his mind that he would like to become an artist, so he went to Paris to study. He had always had a talent for drawing; he was excellent at caricature, and could catch a likeness or an expression admirably; there was life and vigour in all he did. The trouble was that he never learned to draw correctly—perhaps he never worked hard enough. He had a very pleasant stay in Paris, and afterward travelled through other parts of Europe. In 1832 he came of age and entered into possession of the considerable fortune his father had left him; but he did not keep it very long. He did not know how to manage money affairs, and to the end of his life he never learned. He had formed extravagant habits; he was thoughtlessly, almost wildly generous; and he lost large sums in attempting to start a daily newspaper. By 1833 nearly all his money was gone, and it became necessary for him to set to work in earnest to gain his living. He went back to his art studies in Paris, but he was beginning to fear that he would never be a success as an artist; and so he turned to literature. He began by writing articles for the newspapers and magazines, and now that his bread and butter depended on it he worked really hard; and after 1836 it was not only his own bread and butter for which he worked, but that of his wife also, and later for that of his little daughters.

In 1836 he wrote for *Frazer's Magazine* his now famous *Yellowplush Papers*. In 1837 and 1838 *The Great Hoggarty Diamond* appeared in monthly instalments, but it was coldly received by the public. About 1841 he began to write for *Punch*, and contributed many delightful papers and poems. In 1844-46 came *Barry Lyndon* and in 1845-46 *Notes of a Journey from Cornhill to Grand Cairo*.

Yet somehow, in all these works, good as they were, Thackeray never managed to give the public just what it wanted. His brother journalists and the critics admired him as a man of brilliant talent, but the readers of the country took little notice of him. They were taken up with Dickens, buying, in thousands, the monthly parts in which his novels were



appearing. Poor Thackeray had to stand by and watch the success he could not imitate.

A far more terrible trouble than this came to him in 1840. His young wife, so dearly loved, fell ill, and the illness brought on a lesion of the brain, so that her mind failed; and soon it became clear, even to her husband, that she must be taken from her home and cared for elsewhere. So in 1840 Thackeray was left, in a house full of sad memories, to take care as best he could of his two baby girls.

His want of success in literature was partly his own fault. He was naturally indolent, and he hated the idea of setting himself to a really big and serious piece of work. He preferred the short papers and the ballads that gave him little trouble, and brought in just enough money for his needs. He would write verses for any friend who asked him, and scatter his drawings and his parodies freely among his acquaintances. In a small and intimate company he was the most brilliant of talkers, and his friends agreed that his conversation contained many more fine thoughts than did the papers that found their way into print.

Yet, in spite of all this outward brilliance, Thackeray's real nature was serious and melancholy. He had none of Dickens's gay hopefulness, and little of his perseverance. Life seemed to him to be full of hardship and pain; and, since whining over these did not become a man, the only thing to do was to cover up one's wounds with a jest, and get what consolation one could out of such joys as came in one's way. It seemed to him useless to try to represent things as better than they really were. Most writers, even Dickens, he thought, painted men as it was pleasant to imagine them to be, rather than as they really were. This, he resolved, he would not do.

I can't help telling the truth [he said] as I view it, and describing what I see. To describe it otherwise than it seems to me would be falsehood in that calling in which it has pleased Heaven to place me; treason to that conscience that says that men are weak; that truth must be told; that faults must be owned; that pardon must be prayed for; and that love reigns supreme over all.



It was in this spirit that Thackeray, early in 1846, began to write the work that made him famous. During the whole of 1847 and the first half of 1848 novel readers in England had two great treats to look forward to each month. There was an instalment of Dickens's *Dombey and Son*, in the green wrapper that had become so familiar to the readers of the popular novelist's works, and there was an instalment of *Vanity Fair*, which, with the name of William Makepeace Thackeray on its canary-coloured cover, was winning, month by month, fame for the new writer. The first instalment had at once attracted attention and made readers wish for more. It told how Miss Amelia Sedley, having finished her education, left the scholastic establishment of Miss Pinkerton in Chiswick Mall, taking with her on a visit to her home Miss Rebecca Sharp, the poor, despised, clever, rebellious artichoke pupil. This is how it begins:

While the present century was in its teens, and on one sunshiny morning in June, there drove up to the great iron gate of Miss Pinkerton's academy for young ladies, on Chiswick Mall, a large family coach, with two fat horses in blazing harness, driven by a fat coachman in a three-cornered hat and wig, at the rate of four miles an hour. A black servant, who reposed on the box beside the fat coachman, uncurled his bandy legs as soon as the carriage drew up opposite Miss Pinkerton's shining brass plate, and as he pulled the bell, at least a score of young heads were seen peering out of the narrow windows of the stately old brick house. Nay, the acute observer might have recognized the little red nose of good-natured Miss Jemima Pinkerton herself, rising over some geranium-pots in the window of that lady's own drawing-room.

Miss Jemima was not the head of this superior establishment; that place belonged to her majestic sister, whose pride it was that she had been the friend of the great Dr Johnson. Miss Jemima "had all the bills, and the washing, and the mending, and the puddings, and the plate and crockery, and the servants to superintend." Miss Pinkerton presided loftily over the morals of the establishment, and over the teachers engaged in the young ladies' education.

When she was satisfied that all necessary preparations



had been made for Miss Sedley's departure this majestic woman

proceeded to write her own name, and Miss Sedley's, in the flyleaf of a Johnson's Dictionary—the interesting work which she invariably presented to her scholars on their departure from the Mall. . . .

Being commanded by her elder sister to get “the Dictionary” from the cupboard, Miss Jemima had extracted two copies of the book from the receptacle in question. When Miss Pinkerton had finished the inscription in the first, Jemima, with rather a dubious and timid air, handed her the second.

“For whom is this, Miss Jemima?” said Miss Pinkerton, with awful coldness.

“For Becky Sharp,” answered Jemima, trembling very much, and blushing over her withered face and neck, as she turned her back on her sister. “For Becky Sharp: she's going too.”

“MISS JEMIMA!” exclaimed Miss Pinkerton, in the largest capitals. “Are you in your senses? Replace the Dictionary in the closet, and never venture to take such a liberty in future.”

“Well, sister, it's only two-and-ninepence, and poor Becky will be miserable if she don't get one.”

“Send Miss Sedley instantly to me,” said Miss Pinkerton. And so, venturing not to say another word, poor Jemima trotted off, exceedingly flurried and nervous.

So Miss Sedley came in, a pretty and charming girl, with a fresh, bright face and sparkling eyes. Everybody in Miss Pinkerton's establishment loved Amelia; she was so kind and gentle and gay and generous; and she listened quite respectfully to the long and dull parting address that Miss Pinkerton proceeded to give her. In the midst of it entered Becky Sharp. She was not nearly as pretty as Amelia. She was small and slight, with pale sandy hair and greenish eyes that were nearly always cast down. Yet she was not at all humble, as befitted an artful pupil who was dependent on Miss Pinkerton's bounty, and she had found out many ways of enraging her stately mistress, one of which was to speak to her in French, which Becky spoke well and which Miss Pinkerton could not understand, though she pretended she could. She made her adieux in French now, and left Miss Pinkerton almost speechless with anger. She got into the carriage and waited while all the other



pupils kissed and hugged Amelia and cried over her, until at last the good-byes were over.

Sambo of the bandy-legs slammed the carriage-door on his young weeping mistress. He sprang up behind the carriage. "Stop!" cried Miss Jemima, running to the gate with a parcel.

"It's some sandwiches, my dear," said she to Amelia. "You may be hungry, you know; and Becky, Becky Sharp, here's a book for you that my sister—that is, I—Johnson's Dictionary, you know; you mustn't leave us without that. Good-bye. Drive on, coachman. God bless you!"

And the kind creature retreated into the garden, overcome with emotions.

But, lo! and just as the coach drove off, Miss Sharp put her pale face out of the window, and actually flung the book back into the garden.

This almost caused Jemima to faint with terror. "Well, I never,"—said she—"what an audacious——" Emotion prevented her from completing either sentence. The carriage rolled away; the great gates were closed; the bell rang for the dancing lesson. The world is before the two young ladies; and so, farewell to Chiswick Mall.

No wonder that readers longed for the next instalment, that they might learn what happened to the audacious Becky and the charming Amelia; and when it came they were not disappointed. Month by month the interest of the story increased, and readers breathlessly followed Becky in her brilliant career, and rejoiced and wept with sweet Amelia Sedley. Thackeray called his book "A Novel without a Hero," and, indeed, not one of the male characters can approach in interest the marvellous Rebecca. Yet, if we could put her aside, we might say the book has three heroes, all of them well drawn and attractive, and it has many other fine and life-like characters. The title Thackeray took from Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*; Vanity Fair is the great gay world, where men strive for things that are glittering but worthless.

The success of *Vanity Fair* gave Thackeray just the encouragement he needed. He set to work on another novel with a lighter and more hopeful heart. He followed the example of *David Copperfield*, and made a story out of his own life. Arthur



Pendennis, the hero of the story—which was called *Pendennis*—is, in many respects, Thackeray himself. The Charterhouse School, of which Thackeray had such loving memories, is described under the name of the Slaughterhouse; Pendennis's university career at Oxbridge is much like Thackeray's at Cambridge, only more disastrous; and his life in London as a struggling writer is drawn from the author's own experiences.

*Pendennis* added greatly to Thackeray's fame, and he began to be sought after by all sorts of fashionable people, and invited to dinner parties and social functions of every description. He was nearly forty years old now, and his hair was turning grey; he was tall and rather portly, with a noble presence and a fine, open forehead. Unluckily his nose had been accidentally broken in his youth, and this rather spoiled his good looks.

In 1852 came *Esmond*, which many critics think is the best book that Thackeray wrote, and the best historical novel in the English language. It is a story of the days of Queen Anne, and it is full of the spirit of the time. Without using strange and uncouth expressions, without making his characters talk with an abundance of the "methinks," "an-it-please-you's," "ekes," and "whiloms" upon which lesser writers rely for their effects, he manages, by subtle and delicate touches, to carry his readers back into a past age, and make them at home there. A short quotation would not make you realize this, but when you have read the book you will find that you have learned more about the England in which Anne and Marlborough and Swift and Steele and Addison lived than any of your history books can teach you.

Two years later came *The Newcomes*, which many of Thackeray's readers love best of all, if only for the sake of that simple, gallant gentleman, dear Colonel Newcome. The story is supposed to be told by Arthur Pendennis, who appears as one of the minor characters in the book. Clive Newcome, the Colonel's son, who was six years younger than Pendennis, had been his schoolfellow at the Charterhouse; and when the



Colonel came home from India it was Clive who introduced him to Pendennis, who was then living in chambers in London and trying to make an income by his writings. He tells the story of the kind, noble gentleman's life in England; of how he rose to great fortune, and how he fell again; and how he ended his brave life as a pensioner of the Grey Friars foundation, belonging to that same Charterhouse School where he had spent his boyhood. Pendennis writes:

The custom of the school is that on the 12th of December, the Founder's Day, the head gown-boy shall recite a Latin oration, in praise *Fundatoris Nostri*, and upon other subjects, and a goodly company of old Cistercians is generally brought together to attend this oration; after which we go to chapel and hear a sermon; after which we adjourn to a great dinner, where old condisciples meet, old toasts are given, and speeches are made. . . . The boys are already in their seats, with smug fresh faces and shining white collars; the old black-gowned pensioners are on their benches; the chapel is lighted, and Founder's Tomb, with its grotesque carvings, monsters, heraldries, darkles and shines with the most wonderful shadows and lights. There he lies, Fundator Noster, in his ruff and gown, awaiting the great Examination Day. . . . How solemn the well-remembered prayers are, here uttered again in the place where in childhood we used to hear them! How beautiful and decorous the rite! how noble the ancient words of the supplications which the priest utters, and to which generations of fresh children, and troops of bygone seniors, have cried Amen under those arches. The service for Founder's Day is a special one; one of the psalms selected being the thirty-seventh, and we hear—

23. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way.

24. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.

25. I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.

As we came to this verse I chanced to look up from my book towards the swarm of black-coated pensioners, and amongst them—amongst them sate Thomas Newcome.

His dear old head was bent down over his prayer-book; there was no mistaking him. He wore the black gown of the pensioners of Grey Friars. His order of the Bath was on his breast. He stood there amongst the poor brethren, uttering the responses to the psalm. The steps of this good man had been ordered hither by Heaven's decree—to this Almshouse! Here it was ordained that a life all love, and kindness, and honour should end! I heard no more



of prayers, and psalms and sermon after that. How dared I to be in a place of mark, and he be yonder among the poor? O pardon, you noble soul! I ask forgiveness of you for being of a world that has so treated you—you my better, you the honest and gentle and good.

A little later comes the account of the Colonel's death:

At the usual evening hour the chapel bell began to toll, and Thomas Newcome's hands outside the bed feebly beat time. And just as the last bell struck, a peculiar sweet smile shone over his face, and he lifted up his head a little and quickly said, "Adsum!" and fell back. It was the word we used at school when names were called; and lo, he, whose heart was as that of a little child, had answered to his name, and stood in the presence of The Master.

The years during which he was writing these great novels were the happiest of Thackeray's life. His daughters had grown old enough to be his companions, and to make his house a real home once more. He was no longer troubled by the thought that he might leave them alone and unprovided for; he was making large sums of money now, and was able to put away enough to keep them in comfort in case of his death. Thackeray never grew rich. He was too careless of money and too thoughtlessly generous for that. He never became industrious. The printer was sometimes waiting for an instalment of his book when that instalment was scarcely begun.

In 1851 he made his first appearance as a lecturer, and delivered a course of lectures on *The English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century*, which had a great success. Other courses, given at home and in America, followed, and brought in large sums of money. In 1857 he began *The Virginians*, a continuation of *Esmond*, whose monthly numbers ran until October 1859. In the following year he became editor of *The Cornhill Magazine*, and this was the most profitable of all his undertakings. He contributed to it his *Lovel the Widower*, *Philip*, and the delightful *Roundabout Papers*. With the money the *Cornhill* brought him he built for himself a charming new house on Palace Green, Kensington, where he entertained all the great writers of the day, as well as the finest people of fashion. But his health was failing, and on Christmas Eve, 1863, the servant



who carried to his bedside his morning cup of chocolate found him lying dead.

(c) *Charlotte Brontë*

Charlotte Brontë's story is really the story of the Brontë family, for they were all so closely united that it is impossible to tell of one without telling of the others. When, in 1820, they came to live at the house in which they were to spend the rest of their lives there were eight of them—the father, the Reverend Patrick Brontë, tall and handsome, with a nobly formed head, which he held high and erect; the mother, small and pale and delicate-looking; and six small children. The eldest of these was Maria, aged six; then came Elizabeth, aged five, Charlotte, four, Branwell, three, Emily, two, and baby Anne. The house to which they came stood at the top of a steep street in the small Yorkshire village of Haworth. Wide purple moorlands stretched away on three sides of it, the great heights rising one behind the other until they faded in the distance. A grey church stood just beyond the garden wall, and behind the church was the graveyard. The house itself was built of grey stone, like the church. It was a small, eight-roomed house, and it looked bleak and bare standing on that wind-swept height. Yet the six Brontë children loved it dearly all their lives long; they thought of it with longing while they were away, and came back to it eagerly as soon as they were free to do so.

They were small, frail children, not at all like the sturdy boys and girls who lived in their father's parish. They were so quiet that, as their rough, kindly Yorkshire servant said, you would not have known there was a child in the house. They were quieter than usual during those first months in the new house, for their mother lay very ill in the room upstairs. In September 1822 she died; and then her elder sister, Aunt Branwell, came from Cornwall to take charge of the household. Maria was eight years old by this time, and she was a little mother to the others. There was a tiny room in Haworth



Parsonage, built over the passage, which was given up to the children's use. It was called—not the playroom, for the little Brontës never played—but “the children's study.” Here they spent a great deal of their time, reading and drawing and talking gravely to one another. They were marvellously clever children, and they had a stock of information equal to that of many grown-up persons. Maria read the newspapers every day, and discussed politics gravely with her father. They all adored the Duke of Wellington, though Branwell, the only boy of the family, liked sometimes to argue on the side of Napoleon. Their father sometimes gave them lessons, but they learned most from their own reading. Miss Branwell taught the girls sewing and cooking and other useful household arts. She tried to do her duty by these strange children, but she did not understand them, and, though they respected her, they never really loved her. They attended docilely to her lessons, but they were far happier when they were in the cheerful kitchen, with its great blazing fire, learning from the two Yorkshire sisters who were the servants of the house to make bread and to iron clothes.

They were happiest of all when the weather was fine and they were allowed to go out on the moors. They would set out, the elder children carefully leading the toddling little ones, and they would ramble for hours over those wide spaces that they loved almost with passion. The Brontës were never really happy away from the moors; they pined for them when they were away as they pined for their home and for one another.

The first separation came in July 1824, when Maria and Elizabeth were sent to school at Cowan's Bridge, a tiny village between Leeds and Kendal. The school had only lately been opened, and was intended for the daughters of poor clergymen. Only very small fees were charged, and part of the expenses were paid by the subscriptions of friends of the school. At the time when the Brontës were there its affairs were badly mismanaged. Charlotte Brontë, who joined her sisters at Cowan's Bridge in December (Emily came a little later), has given an



account of the school, under the name of Lowood, in her book *Jane Eyre*. A great outcry arose when this book was published, and she was accused of having exaggerated and misrepresented what had occurred, but she declared that she had written nothing except what she believed to be true, though she had not meant the school of her story to be recognized as standing for Cowan's Bridge. It is probable that, looking back on her childish sufferings, she may have imagined them worse than they really were, but, even allowing for that, the school must have been bad enough for delicate, sensitive girls like the Brontës. This is how Charlotte describes the first morning that Jane Eyre (who is herself) spent at Lowood:

When I again unclosed my eyes, a loud bell was ringing: the girls were up and dressing; day had not yet begun to dawn, and a rushlight or two burnt in the room. I too rose reluctantly; it was bitter cold, and I dressed as well as I could for shivering, and washed when there was a basin at liberty, which did not occur soon, as there was but one basin to six girls, on the stands down the middle of the room. Again the bell rang: all formed in file, two and two, and in that order descended the stairs and entered the cold and dimly-lit school-room.

Then came prayers and a Scripture lesson, lasting for more than an hour, and by the time the lesson was over the day had fully dawned and the girls went in to breakfast. "How glad I was," says Jane,

to behold a prospect of getting something to eat! I was now nearly sick from inanition, having taken so little the day before.

The refectory was a great, low-ceiled, gloomy room; on two long tables smoked basins of something hot, which, however, to my dismay, sent forth an odour far from inviting. I saw a universal manifestation of discontent when the fumes of the repast met the nostrils of those destined to swallow it; from the van of the procession, the tall girls of the first class, rose the whispered words:

"Disgusting! The porridge is burnt again!" . . .

Ravenous, and now very faint, I devoured a spoonful or two of my portion without thinking of its taste; but the first edge of hunger blunted, I perceived I had got in hand a nauseous mess: burnt porridge is almost as bad as rotten potatoes; famine itself soon sickens over it. The spoons were moved slowly. I saw each girl taste her food and try to swallow it; but in most cases the effort



was soon relinquished. Breakfast was over, and none had breakfasted.

The headmistress of the school, Miss Temple, for whom Jane shows always the warmest love and admiration, ordered that a lunch of bread and cheese should be served to the famishing girls to make up for the disaster of the morning, but this small indulgence did not at all suit the views of the pious founder of the institution, Mr Brocklehurst. When he visited the school a little later he inquired into the incident before the assembled school, and Miss Temple quietly explained the reason for what she had done.

“Madam, allow me an instant—you are aware that my plan in bringing up these girls is, not to accustom them to habits of luxury and indulgence, but to render them hardy, patient, self-denying. Should any little accidental disappointment of the appetite occur, such as the spoiling of a meal, the under or the over-dressing of a dish, the incident ought not to be neutralized by replacing with something more delicate the comfort lost, thus pampering the body and obviating the aim of this institution; it ought to be improved to the spiritual edification of the pupils, by encouraging them to evince fortitude under the temporary privation. . . . Oh, madam, when you put bread and cheese, instead of burnt porridge, into these children’s mouths, you may indeed feed their vile bodies, but you little think how you starve their immortal souls!”

Under such discipline as this it is small wonder that the little Brontës, with their frail bodies and their delicate appetites, pined and grew weaker. Maria, the marvellously gifted eldest sister, failed rapidly. Her father came and took her home in February 1825, and early in May she died. A few weeks later Elizabeth also was sent home in a dying state, and Mr Brontë, thoroughly alarmed, carried off his two younger daughters, Charlotte and Emily.

Elizabeth died in June, and now Charlotte, only nine years old, was left to be the little mother of the three younger than herself. She looked after them with anxious, loving care. The old life was taken up. The children read and studied, had some lessons with their father, and many from Aunt Branwell, were cared for by the kindly maids in the kitchen, and, now



they were growing older, took longer and longer rambles over their beloved moors. They seldom saw any other children, and when they did they were shy and unhappy in their company. Kindly people sometimes invited them to some small children's festivity, but it was painful to see how they all clung together and how frightened they looked; it was felt that they were best left alone.

Thus their lives went on for nearly six years, and then Charlotte was sent to school again, this time to an excellent private school on the road between Leeds and Huddersfield, kept by a Miss Wooler. She was happy here, although she pined for her brother and sisters and the wide moors; but when she had got over her first shyness she made friends with some of the other girls, Ellen Nussey and Mary and Martha Taylor, and these friendships lasted through her whole life. When she came home, after two years at Roe Head, as Miss Wooler's school was called, she was stronger and less painfully shy than she had ever been before. She spent two quiet years at Haworth, teaching her sisters and going on with her own studies. She would have liked to have stayed longer at home, but she knew that her father's income was a small one, and that there was not enough money to pay for a good education and start in life for her brother Branwell. Branwell was the pride and hope of his family; he was a fine, handsome boy, and he was, like his sisters, wonderfully clever in many directions. They all, but Charlotte especially, adored him, and looked forward to his having a great career. No sacrifice that any of them could make was considered too great if it would help Branwell; and so timid, shrinking Charlotte prepared to go out to earn her own living, that she might not be a charge on her father's scanty resources.

She went first to her old school at Roe Head, this time as a teacher, and Emily went with her as a pupil. But Emily pined so for her home and the moors that her health suffered, and after three months she was sent back to Haworth and Anne came in her place. Charlotte too felt the separation from her



home as a hard trial, and the sisters began to think of some way by which they could make money and yet be all together in the place they loved dearest on earth. Almost from their babyhood they had written stories and poems, and now they resolved to try to get some of these published. But for a time nothing came of their plan. Charlotte stayed on at Roe Head, and Emily went as governess to a school in Halifax. By 1838 both of them were in such bad health that they were obliged to come back for a time to rest and recover at the old parsonage.

They came back to sorrow and disappointment. Branwell had fulfilled none of their hopes. He was idle and dissipated, and he did no good in any of the posts that were found for him. He lounged about Haworth, drinking with all the idlers of the place at the village inn, and wasting the great gifts that he certainly possessed. It was a bitter grief to Charlotte. She loved her brother with passion, and it was long before she quite lost hope that he would one day be the great man that he might have been.

In 1839 Charlotte and Anne both went out as governesses, while Emily remained at home. The three sisters were now eagerly considering another plan which they thought might keep them all together at Haworth. They thought of opening a small school. The parsonage would take two or three boarders, and in time they might be able to have larger premises. Charlotte, however, realized that if they were to do this they must be able to teach more subjects than they were able to do at the present. A knowledge of some foreign language was absolutely necessary, and after a great deal of discussion the sisters decided to ask their aunt, Miss Branwell, to lend them enough money to enable Charlotte and Emily to spend a year at a school abroad, where they might learn the language of the country and also improve their drawing and music. Miss Branwell consented, and the two girls went to an establishment in Brussels kept by a M. and Mme Heger.

It is on this stay in Brussels that Charlotte Brontë's novel



*Villette* is founded. It shows the loneliness and homesickness that she felt, and it shows also how the experience of this new life brought her strength and self-reliance and some happiness. She did not like the people of Villette (or Brussels, as it really was) and she did not care for Mme Heger, and she painted the school, as she had painted Cowan's Bridge, in darker colours than seem to have been necessary. M. Heger she adored. He is the Paul Emmanuel of *Villette*—a fiery, irascible, clever little man, with a great sense of his own importance and yet with a great humility, whose heart is full of kindness and whose tongue is full of gibes. As we read of the hot-tempered little Professor, with his delightful, domineering ways, we cannot help loving him, and we understand how great his charm must have been to inexperienced, hero-worshipping Charlotte Brontë.

Charlotte and Emily both came home in November 1842, after nearly a year's stay, recalled by the death of their aunt, but Charlotte returned to Brussels and stayed until January 1844. When she came back the plan of opening a school was again seriously discussed. Their aunt had left them a little money, which gave them the capital required. They made their preparations, and sent out prospectuses, but pupils were hard to find, though friends did their best to help. Soon it became clear that even if pupils could be found the scheme must be given up, for Branwell's bad habits had so increased that it would have been impossible to have children in the house while he was living there. Quietly and sadly, though with bitterness of heart, the three girls saw their long-cherished vision fade away.

They went back again to the idea of publishing some of their poems and tales. In the dreary years of 1844 and 1845 they kept up some sort of hope by rewriting and polishing those they had written and by writing some fresh ones. In the autumn of 1845 a small volume made up of the poems of all three sisters was ready; even the reserved and silent Emily, who was always unwilling to show anything she had written, but who was by far the greatest poet of the three, had contri-



buted several. A publisher was at length found who was willing to publish the book, on condition that the authors paid all expenses; and in May 1846 *Poems by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell*, the names chosen by the sisters, appeared.

The book attracted little notice, though it contained the strange and beautiful poems by Emily Brontë which have since been judged by critics to belong to the very highest order of poetry. Very few copies were sold, and the money, taken from their aunt's legacy, which they had spent upon the book was lost.

They tried again. Each of them prepared a prose story—Charlotte *The Professor*, Emily *Wuthering Heights*, Anne *Agnes Grey*. They sent these to one publisher after another, but each time they came back with a note of refusal.

This year of 1846 was a hard one for the three sisters. Their father was growing old; his sight was failing, and it was feared he would soon be blind. Branwell, the brother on whom all their hopes had rested, was going from bad to worse. He had given up attempting to earn his own living; he got into debt in a fashion that shocked the frugal, upright Brontës, and paying his debts for him brought them very near to absolute poverty; and he was drinking himself to death, while they looked sorrowfully on, unable to do him any good. Yet through all these trials the three girls worked steadily on. Nearly all the work of the household fell to them now, for Tabby, the old parsonage servant, was nearly eighty, and was more of a care than a help; yet they would not send away one who had served them long and faithfully.

In August Charlotte went with her father to Manchester, where he was to be operated upon for cataract, and while she was there she began to write another novel. In September, when the operation was successfully over, she came back to Haworth, and through all the autumn and winter she worked hard at her book. Her mornings were spent in work in the house. After the early dinner she sat down in the quiet parlour with some small sheets of paper, a square of stiff cardboard,



and a pencil. She wrote in a tiny hand that can scarcely be read comfortably without a magnifying-glass, holding the cardboard and paper close up to her short-sighted eyes. As the room grew dark she would sit writing in the firelight; then, after giving her father his tea, she and her sisters would read or sew until nine o'clock. Then the work would be laid aside and the candles put out, and the three frail figures would pace slowly up and down the small room, telling of the stories and poems they were writing or meant to write. It was during some of these evening talks that Charlotte told her sisters about the heroine of the book she was then working at. Most heroines, she said, were lovely and accomplished, but hers was to be plain and altogether insignificant in her appearance and her manner. Emily and Anne declared that such a heroine could not be interesting. "I will prove to you that you are wrong," said Charlotte. "I will show you a heroine as plain and as small as myself, who shall be as interesting as any of yours."

In the spring of 1847 a publisher was found who agreed to publish *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey* on condition that the authors paid the cost of the production; and in October of the same year *Jane Eyre* was published by Smith and Elder. At this time *Dombey and Son* and *Vanity Fair* were still coming out in monthly parts, and new works by Tennyson and Ruskin had lately been published. Yet there were many readers to be found for *Jane Eyre*, and their numbers increased every week. Before long the book was being talked about all over the country, and everyone was wondering who this new author, Currer Bell, could be.

When Charlotte Brontë heard from her publishers of the success of her book she could at first scarcely believe the news was true; and when she was convinced of it there were still some bitter drops in her cup of triumph. There was the indignation of the supporters of Cowan Bridge at the picture she had given of the school; and there were attacks by various critics on the morality of the book. These attacks gave Char-



lotte Brontë the keenest pain. She was deeply and sincerely religious, and she was very strict in her ideas of propriety; but staid and demure and even prim as she seemed, she had strong feelings and passions. Few people would have suspected this shy, plain little lady of thirty of holding almost wildly romantic ideas on the subject of love, yet so it was; and it was because she wrote of love not in the ordinary, conventional way, but as a great and wonderful passion, that the critics called her immoral.

Yet in spite of the critics the sales of *Jane Eyre* went up week by week, and the praises of those whose opinion she valued most—especially of Thackeray, of whom she had made a hero—comforted Charlotte in the distress the unjust blame had caused. It seemed as if life might be brightening for the Brontë family, and the sisters began to look forward hopefully to the future. Then once more the clouds gathered, darker than ever. Branwell fell ill, and, after some terrible weeks of suffering, in September 1848 he died. Then Emily developed the same dread disease—consumption—and failed quickly. She refused to see a doctor or to be treated in any way as an invalid. Her sisters watched her in an agony of distress, but they were helpless. She died before the end of the year, sitting with the others in the family dining-room, and refusing, almost to the last moment, all help or sympathy.

There were five of the Brontës now in the churchyard, and only three in the silent house. Charlotte watched the one sister left to her in painful anxiety, for Anne was delicate, and had the cough and the pain in her side that they had all learned to dread. She was sweet-tempered and loving, and, unlike her strange, stoical sister Emily, received with gratitude the tender service that Charlotte offered her. It was all of no use. In May 1849 Charlotte, in a last desperate effort to save her sister's life, took her away to Scarborough; and at Scarborough she died.

Charlotte came back to Haworth Parsonage and took up her lonely life. Of the six children who had once lived there



together she only was left. Her father was old and ailing, and his habits of solitude had grown upon him. Most of his time was spent in his own study; his meals were served there, and his daughter saw little of him. For long hours she sat alone in the dining-room where the three had been used to sit together; and when nine o'clock came she put out the lights and paced sadly up and down the little room, thinking of those who had once talked eagerly with her in that evening hour. She tried hard not to give way to the depression that so nearly overwhelmed her, and she began a new book, hoping to forget some of her sorrow in hard work. "Sometimes when I wake in the morning," she wrote to Ellen Nussey, who had been her faithful friend since their schooldays,

and know that Solitude, Remembrance, and Longing are to be almost my sole companions all the day through—that at night I shall go to bed with them, that they will long keep me sleepless—that next morning I shall wake to them again—sometimes, Nell, I have a heavy heart of it. But crushed I am not yet, nor robbed of elasticity, nor of hope, nor quite of endeavour. I have some strength to fight the battle of life.

The book she was now writing she called *Shirley*. It was a story of that part of the country in which the school of Roe Head was situated, and it told of the riots and disturbances that had followed the introduction of machinery in some of the Yorkshire mills. Charlotte had heard the stories of these riots which old people, who had been alive at the time, were fond of telling, and she wove them into her story with great skill. *Shirley*, the heroine, is a picture of Emily Brontë as her sister thought she might have been had the circumstances of her life been happier.

*Shirley* appeared in 1849, and was even more successful than *Jane Eyre* had been. Charlotte found herself a literary lion. She paid two or three visits to London to see her publisher on matters of business, and on these occasions she was taken to all sorts of fashionable gatherings and introduced to the most famous people of the day, including Thackeray, her idol. She was invited by people who admired her genius and sym-  
 556



thized with her sorrows to stay with them at their town or their country houses. Very few of these invitations were accepted. She was still the shy, plain, quiet Charlotte Brontë, who shrank from strangers, and was happiest in the lonely parsonage, full as it was of sad memories.

Her next story was *Villette*, which is her masterpiece. It is, as has been said, founded on her experiences during her stay in Brussels. The heroine, Lucy Snow, is like Jane Eyre, and like Charlotte Brontë herself—small and insignificant, plain of face, and quiet in manner, with a strong brain, and a wild, passionate heart. *Villette* is a book that you will enjoy whenever you read it, though you will not see its full beauty until you are older.

This was her last story. In 1854 she married her father's curate, Mr Nicholls, and he came to live in the old house that had been her home all her life. She was very happy in her marriage, but her happiness did not last long. Her health failed rapidly, and she died in March 1855, when she was thirty-nine years old. Her fame and the fame of her sister Emily have grown steadily. Emily is now recognized as a great poet, and Charlotte as one of the greatest of the Victorian novelists.

(d) *George Eliot*

In the midst of the rich Midland district of England—Shakespeare's country—the little girl who was to be the novelist of the Midland country-folk was born and brought up. Her father, Robert Evans, was an estate agent, "whose extensive knowledge in very varied practical departments," his daughter says, "made his services valued through several counties." He took up his duties on a big Warwickshire estate a few weeks after the Reverend Patrick Brontë had settled with his family at Haworth; and he brought to the "charming, red-brick, ivy-covered house," called Griff, which was to be his home his wife and three children. Christiana, the eldest, was six years old, Isaac was four, and then came Mary



Ann, the baby girl, who was to become the famous George Eliot.

All her memories of her early years were happy ones. She was devoted to her brother Isaac, and as soon as she had learned to walk she would toddle after him through the farm-yard and meadows, only happy when he was in her sight; and as they grew older she was eager to join in his games, and proud when he showed her any sign of favour. She has told us about these boy and girl playmates in *The Mill on the Floss*, and in the *Brother and Sister* sonnets.

I cannot choose but think upon the time  
When our two lives grew like two buds that kiss  
At lightest thrill from the bee's swinging chime,  
Because the one so near the other is.  
He was the elder, and a little man  
Of forty inches, bound to show no dread,  
And I the girl that puppy-like now ran,  
Now lagged behind my brother's larger tread.  
I held him wise, and when he talked to me  
Of snakes and birds, and which God loved the best,  
I thought his knowledge marked the boundary  
Where men grew blind, though angels knew the rest.  
If he said, "Hush!" I tried to hold my breath,  
Wherever he said, "Come!" I stepped in faith.

They wandered over the flowery meadows, and through the copse where sometimes the gipsies made their camp; they played at marbles and spun tops and picked blackberries in the hedges; they went fishing in the brown canal, and watched the black barges make their slow way under the wide-arched bridge.

School parted us; we never found again  
That childish world where our two spirits mingled  
Like scents from varying roses that remain  
One sweetness, nor can ever more be singled. . . .  
But were another childhood world my share,  
I would be born a little sister there.

When Isaac Evans was eight years old he was sent away to boarding-school, and Mary Ann went to join her elder sister at a school at Attleborough. They stayed there for about four years, and then they were sent to a larger school at Nuneaton. At this school there was a governess called Miss Lewis, and to



her Mary Ann gave the worshipping love that she had before given to her brother Isaac. She was an ardent, affectionate little girl, and she could not be happy unless she had someone to whom she could cling in adoration, and who would love her warmly in return. Miss Lewis was a devout Evangelical Churchwoman, and her pupil eagerly received her religious teaching and became devout in her turn. After a few years at Nuneaton Mary Ann was sent to a school at Coventry, kept by two sisters, the Misses Franklin, who were also ardent in the Evangelical faith; so that when, at the age of sixteen, she left school and came home to live at Griff she was full of high resolves, and eager to bring her religious principles to bear on her daily life.

She still wrote to Miss Lewis and told her all her difficulties, and all her failures to live the Christ-like life that she had planned; and Miss Lewis advised and comforted her, and tried to help her in the trials and the cares that very soon came upon her.

The year after Mary Ann came home her mother died, and the next year her sister Christiana married, so the younger daughter was left alone in the old home to keep house for her father. She took a great pride in doing all her household tasks thoroughly. She learned to cook and to make pickles and preserves, and she grew familiar with the work of the dairy, and all the operations connected with the business of a farm. She had been used to ride about the country with her father since the days when, as a small girl, she had stood between his knees in the old-fashioned gig while he told her something about his work, and what he was doing to make the best of the land and to improve the crops. She met and talked to the country people, and grew to understand their ways, and to admire them for their industry, their cheerfulness under hardships, and their kindliness to one another.

While she was living this busy practical life she was trying to live a busy intellectual life too. She read and studied and tried hard to add to her store of knowledge. She had been



eager to learn at school, and had been looked upon as a girl of great and unusual gifts. Now her brain was developing quickly, and she was growing into the remarkable woman whom we know as George Eliot. Yet she never neglected her household duties. "I write with a very tremulous hand, as you will perceive," says one of her letters to Miss Lewis;

both this and many other defects in my letter are attributable to a mighty cause—no other than the boiling of currant jelly. I have had much of this occupation lately, and I grieve to say I have not gone through it so cheerfully as the character of a Christian who professes to do *all*, even the most trifling duty, as the Lord demands.

In another letter she wrote:

My mind presents an assemblage of disjointed specimens of history, ancient and modern; scraps of poetry picked up from Shakespeare, Cowper, Wordsworth, and Milton; newspaper topics; morsels of Addison and Bacon, Latin verbs, geometry, entomology, and chemistry; reviews and metaphysics—all arrested and petrified and smothered by the fast-thickening everyday accession of actual events, relative anxieties, and household cares and vexations.

Toward the end of 1840 Mr Evans gave up his position and his house to his son Isaac, and retired with his daughter to a pleasant house in Coventry. Here Miss Evans met a number of people who were deeply interested in all sorts of intellectual matters. Their society made her more eager than ever to study and to learn, that she might do some piece of real, useful work in the world. She began a translation of a German book, Strauss's *Life of Jesus*. She spent two years over this, working hard for many hours a day, and she was thoroughly weary when it was finished and ready for publication. Then her father fell ill, and from 1846 to 1849 most of her time was spent in nursing and tending him. When he died, in May 1849, she was worn out and desolate. She spent nearly ten months abroad, and came back, refreshed and strong, in March 1850; and after much thought and consultation with her friends she decided to take up literature as her life's task. Her views on religion had by this time become modified, and she was no longer a devout Evangelical Churchwoman.



In September 1851 she obtained the post of sub-editor of *The Westminster Review*, and went to live in London. Here she became acquainted with some of the foremost writers of the day, who were contributors to the paper. She herself wrote many articles for the *Review*, and did a good deal of other literary work, but it was not until 1856 that she tried her hand at a story. "It had always been a vague dream of mine," she says,

that some time or other I might write a novel; and my shadowy conception of what the novel was to be varied, of course, from one epoch of my life to another. But I never went further towards the actual writing of the novel than an introductory chapter describing a Staffordshire village, and the life of the neighbouring farm-houses; and as the years passed on I lost all hope that I should ever be able to write a novel.

Encouraged by friends, however, she took this opening chapter and went on with the story; and in less than two months she completed it, and called it *The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton*, which was to form part of a series to be called *Scenes from Clerical Life*. It was sent to Blackwood, the publisher, signed "George Eliot"; and it was accepted, and published in *Blackwood's Magazine*, January 1857.

Very soon the reading public began to talk about the Reverend Amos Barton and his gentle, lovely wife, Milly. Who could have written this really beautiful story? There were all sorts of guesses, but no one guessed Miss Evans. Some readers declared it must have been written by a clergyman, others thought it was the work of the novelist Bulwer-Lytton. Carlyle, Thackeray, and Froude praised the story highly. Dickens was enthusiastic, and he came nearer to guessing who was the author than did anyone else. It must, he said, be a woman, or, if not, "no man ever before had the art of making himself so like a woman since the world began." There was a certain Mr Liggins of Warwick who claimed that the story was his, but only a few people believed him; it was this claim which finally decided Miss Evans, or George Eliot, as after this time she was nearly always called, to reveal her secret.



Two other tales, *Mr Gilfil's Love Story* and *Janet's Repentance*, appeared before the end of the year, and made up the volume of *Scenes from Clerical Life*. In 1859 came George Eliot's first long novel, *Adam Bede*, with its workman hero, who is largely drawn from her own father; its saintly Methodist preacher, the factory-worker Dinah Morris; poor, pretty little Hetty; and, best of all, Mrs Poyser. Mrs Poyser is the sharp-tongued wife of a substantial farmer, and in some of her ways is like the bustling, housewifely Mrs Evans of Griff. She rules the farmhouse and everybody in it, but she is truly kind-hearted and a delightful woman. Some of her sayings have almost passed into proverbs: "If you get your head stuck in a bog your legs may as well go after it"; "He's welly like a cock as thinks the sun's rose o' purpose to hear him crow"; "I'm not denyin' the women are foolish: God Almighty made 'em to match the men." And then she talks of the "weather bein' i' fault, as there's folks 'ud stand on their heads and then say the fault was i' their boots."

George Eliot never wrote anything better than *Adam Bede*, though *The Mill on the Floss*, which came next, is the favourite with many people. The early chapters of *The Mill on the Floss* tell the story of a brother and sister—Tom and Maggie Tulliver—whose experiences are very like those of Mary Ann and Isaac Evans. The book is full of a delightful humour, though it has its sad and painful scenes. The early part is better than the later chapters, and many incidents that have to do with Maggie and her brother are so life-like that we feel sure they must really have happened in George Eliot's own childhood. Here is one of them:

On Wednesday, the day before the aunts and uncles were coming, there were such various and suggestive scents, as of plum-cakes in the oven and jellies in the hot state, mingled with the aroma of gravy, that it was impossible to feel altogether gloomy: there was hope in the air. Tom and Maggie made several inroads into the kitchen, and, like other marauders, were induced to keep aloof for a time only by being allowed to carry away a sufficient load of booty.



They had had a jam-puff each, and there remained a third, which Tom cut in halves.

"Shut your eyes, Maggie."

"What for?"

"You never mind what for. Shut 'em when I tell you."

Maggie obeyed.

"Now, which'll you have, Maggie—right hand or left?"

"I'll have that with the jam run out," said Maggie, keeping her eyes shut to please Tom.

"Why, you don't like that, you silly. You may have it if it comes to you fair, but I shan't give it you without. Right or left—you choose, now. Ha-a-a!" said Tom, in a tone of exasperation, as Maggie peeped. "You keep your eyes shut, now, else you shan't have any."

Maggie's power of sacrifice did not extend so far; indeed, I fear she cared less that Tom should enjoy the utmost possible amount of puff, than that he should be pleased with her for giving him the best bit. So she shut her eyes, quite close, till Tom told her to "say which," and then she said, "Left hand."

"You've got it," said Tom, in rather a bitter tone.

"What! the bit with the jam run out?"

"No; here, take it," said Tom firmly, handing decidedly the best piece to Maggie.

"Oh, please, Tom, have it: I don't mind—I like the other: please take this."

"No, I shan't," said Tom, almost crossly, beginning on his own inferior piece.

Maggie, thinking it was no use to contend further, began too, and ate up her half puff with considerable relish as well as rapidity. But Tom had finished first, and had to look on while Maggie ate her last morsel or two, feeling in himself a capacity for more. Maggie didn't know Tom was looking at her; she was seesawing on the elder-bough, lost to almost everything but a vague sense of jam and idleness.

"Oh, you greedy thing!" said Tom, when she had swallowed the last morsel. He was conscious of having acted very fairly, and thought she ought to have considered this, and made up to him for it. He would have refused a bit of hers beforehand, but one is naturally at a different point of view before and after one's own share of puff is swallowed.

Maggie turned quite pale. "Oh, Tom, why didn't you ask me?"

"I wasn't going to ask you for a bit, you greedy. You might have thought of it without, when you knew I gave you the best bit."

"But I wanted you to have it—you know I did," said Maggie, in an injured tone.



"Yes, but I wasn't going to do what wasn't fair, like Spouncer. He always takes the best bit, if you don't punch him for it; and if you choose the best with your eyes shut, he changes his hands. But if I go halves, I'll go 'em fair—only I wouldn't be a greedy."

*Silas Marner* followed *The Mill on the Floss* in 1861. It is a shorter story than any of the others, but it is perhaps the most finished and perfect of any. In *Romola* (1863) George Eliot left her own familiar countryside, and wrote of Florence as it was in the fifteenth century. She came back to Warwickshire in *Felix Holt* (1866), and the first chapter of this book contains one of the finest descriptions of the Midlands that has ever been written.

George Eliot was now living in a large house, called the Priory, at Regent's Park. She did not care to go much into society, but many people came to see her. On Sunday afternoons she held a reception, and then her friends were allowed to bring with them others who were eager to see and speak with the famous authoress. She was only about forty-five years old, but she looked an elderly woman. She was not beautiful—her features were too strongly marked, her mouth and jaw too large, for that—but she looked very attractive as she sat in an arm-chair near the fire in her drawing-room, a lace mantilla over her hair, now turning grey, her blue eyes clear and calm, her finely formed hands lying in her lap. Strangers would be brought up to this dignified, fragile-looking lady, and she would speak a few words to them in her low, musical voice; or she would enter into a discussion, usually serious, but sometimes brightening into playfulness. Most of her worshippers found her rather awe-inspiring, and felt that being presented to her was something of an ordeal; yet they went away worshipping her more devoutly than ever, and feeling that the hour they had just passed was the greatest hour of their lives.

After *Felix Holt* George Eliot tried a drama in verse, which she called *The Spanish Gypsy*, but this was not very successful either as a drama or as poetry. Then, in 1871, came *Middle-*



*march*, which is one of the finest of her novels, and was received with great enthusiasm. *Daniel Deronda* followed in 1876.

In April 1880 George Eliot married Mr John Cross, who had for some years been her devoted friend. But, like Charlotte Brontë, she had but a short time in which to enjoy the happiness of her married life. Her health, which had always been delicate, failed quickly, and in December of the same year she died.

## II. THE PROPHETS

### (a) *Carlyle*

What is a prophet? The prophets of old were, we know, the men chosen to make known God's will to His people; and Carlyle himself says that a prophet is a great man, "a messenger sent from the Infinite Unknown with tidings for us." It was in this way that the men of Carlyle's own day looked upon him. His words were to them more than the words of an ordinary man; they had a special truth and wisdom that could only come by inspiration. It was, as we have said, a time when thoughtful men and women were perplexed and troubled about many things. The new discoveries and the new ideas seemed to be upsetting all their old beliefs. There were many who wished to hold firmly to the old faith and the old ways, but who felt they could not answer the arguments brought against them. They felt, too, that there was much in the condition of the country that ought to be altered; that, in spite of their new, boasted knowledge, things had gone wrong; but they did not know how to put them right. Then came Carlyle, to be, in his own way, their supporter and teacher. His way was so unlike the ways of other writers that at first he was misunderstood and little noticed, and, when he was noticed, reviled. But his words had such force and power that by and by nearly everyone, even the indifferent and the careless, began to listen to them, and Carlyle became the nation's prophet.



The training that had fitted him for this high office had been a hard one. He was born in the remote Dumfriesshire village of Ecclefechan. His father was a stonemason, his mother a pious, kindly woman, whose chief care it was that her children should be brought up in the fear of the Lord. The home was poor, but well kept and comfortable, and little Thomas, running barefoot over the heather, was happy enough, although, even at that time, he had a habit of brooding over the things that seemed to him wrong in the world around him, which gave him sometimes a dark and gloomy air. Until he was nine years old he went to the village school with his brothers, and then he was sent to the grammar school at Annan, the nearest town. He did not care for school, although he learned eagerly the things that interested him, and he became specially proficient in Latin and French. Year by year his serious moods grew upon him, and he was tormented with questionings as to what was the real purpose of life, and how he himself could best do his part in carrying out God's will. His father and mother, like many of the Scottish peasantry, longed earnestly to see at least one of their sons a minister of the Church; and Thomas was such a clever, serious lad that there seemed no doubt it ought to be he. He must go to Edinburgh and study. So they gave him the small sum of money they had painfully saved for this purpose, and he set off to walk the eighty miles to the capital.

He found there no help in his difficulties. The Scottish universities at that time had little discipline or order, and although usually the teaching was brilliant, the years that Carlyle spent at Edinburgh happened to be very bad years in that respect also. Long afterward he spoke bitterly of his university (not mentioning it by name), saying that if you had, anywhere,

walled in a square enclosure ; furnished it with a small, ill-chosen Library; and then turned loose into it eleven hundred Christian striplings, to tumble about as they listed, from three to seven years; certain persons, under the title of Professors, being stationed at the



gates to declare aloud that it was a University and exact considerable admission fees—you had, not, indeed, in mechanical structure, yet in spiritual result, some imperfect resemblance of our High Seminary.

Carlyle did not attempt to follow the regular course of study at the university, and he left in 1814 without taking a degree; but he had worked hard at mathematics, and in 1815 was appointed mathematics master at Annan School, with a salary of seventy pounds a year. He had given up all idea of becoming a minister of the Church. He was unhappy and restless. The questions of the day puzzled him, as they puzzled others, and he had no natural gaiety of disposition to help him sometimes to put them aside. He was poor and insignificant, and he felt that he had little chance of doing the great things he had dreamed of doing. Added to all this, the dyspepsia which formed one of the great trials of his later life now began to torment him, and to make still darker his gloomy outlook. He worked hard, but took little pleasure in his work.

From Annan he went to another post in a school at Kirkcaldy, and here he met a young man about his own age, Edward Irving. The two became great friends, and when Edward Irving left Kirkcaldy Carlyle decided to go too. He gave up his post, and, with about seventy pounds that he had managed to save in his pocket, went to Edinburgh.

At Edinburgh he earned a little money by teaching and by translating scientific pamphlets, and he found enough literary work of one kind and another to provide him with a living, though a scanty one. He was still full of misgivings, tormented by fears for the future, and unhappy because he could not see clearly the purpose and meaning of life.

Then came a wonderful day when the darkness of his spirit lifted, and the great truths which he was to hold so steadfastly, and teach so earnestly, began to reveal themselves to him. He has told what happened on this day in his book *Sartor Resartus*, giving it as an incident in the life of Herr Teufelsdröckh, the German professor; but really, as he afterward acknowledged, it was an experience of his own, and it



took place one June afternoon as he went down Leith Walk to bathe in the Firth of Forth. He was, he says, "the miserablest man" in the city as he walked down the hot, close street,

when, all at once, there rose a Thought in me, and I asked myself: "What *art* thou afraid of? Wherefore, like a coward, dost thou forever pip and whimper, and go cowering and trembling? Despicable biped! what is the sum-total of the worst that lies before thee? Death? Well, Death; and say the pangs of Tophet too, and all that the Devil and Man may, will or can do against thee! Hast thou not a heart; canst thou not suffer whatso it be; and, as a Child of Freedom, though outcast, trample Tophet itself under thy feet, while it consumes thee? Let it come, then; and I will meet it and defy it." And as I so thought, there rushed like a stream of fire over my whole soul; and I shook base Fear away from me forever.

Fear having gone, he was able to look at life calmly and clearly, and though he often found it hard and painful he was never again ready to despair. Carlyle could never be a happy man. His natural temper was irritable and impatient. His health was bad, and he was always apt to look on the gloomy side of things. He had a brave heart, a strong, unfaltering faith in God, and a belief in the real goodness of his fellow-men, if only they would cast off the shams that were stifling all that was best in them, and let their true spiritual nature have room to grow and strengthen. Gradually he made for himself a creed, by which he himself ruled his life, and which he preached in his heart-stirring fashion to his countrymen. "A lie cannot endure for ever." "Man everywhere is the born enemy of lies." "Quackery gives birth to nothing, gives death to all things." "All true work is sacred; in all true work, were it but true hand-labour, there is something of divineness." "Blessed is he who has found his work; let him ask no other blessedness; he has a work, a life-purpose; he has found it and will follow it." "Do the Duty which lies nearest to thee, which thou knowest to be a Duty. Thy second Duty will already have become clearer." "Thought without Reverence is barren, perhaps poisonous." "No sadder proof can be given by a man of his own littleness than a disbelief in Great Men."



These are some of the chief articles of Carlyle's creed. You will see as we go on with the story of his life how far he lived up to them.

In 1826 Carlyle married Miss Jane Welsh, a clever, brilliant girl of a good Haddington family. She had talent enough to have made a name in the world for herself, but she knew that her husband had a rarer and more precious thing than talent—genius; and from the time of her marriage she set herself to help and serve him in every way she could. They lived for a time in Edinburgh, and Carlyle went on writing for the magazines and making translations of German books. He felt more and more strongly that he could not do his best work unless he were perfectly quiet and undisturbed; and so, in the spring of 1828, he and his wife went to live at a farm belonging to Mrs Carlyle's mother, five miles from Dumfries. It was called Craigenputtock, which means 'the Hill of Hawks,' and it was as quiet as the heart of any man could desire. There was no other house in sight, and no road leading to the farm. Great stretches of meadowland lay all around it, rising in front to the heather-covered heights of the Solway hills. Carlyle's brother Alexander managed the farm, which supplied the family with milk, eggs, ham, and poultry. The only help they had in the house was that of a peasant lass, who did the roughest work, and delicate, town-bred Mrs Carlyle must do the rest. She cooked and cleaned and sewed, she looked after the poultry, and milked the cows when the byre-woman was out of the way. She learned to bake bread for her dyspeptic husband, who could not eat the bread that came from the baker's shop at Dumfries. She even scoured the floors and polished the grates; Carlyle, with his pipe in his mouth, looking approvingly on. In his boyhood he had been used to see his mother serve her household after the same fashion, and he did not realize how great was the difference between her and his delicate wife. Mrs Carlyle, on her part, tried not to complain, satisfied if, with all her toil, she could serve her husband; for she knew that, though to onlookers he might seem rough and



indifferent, he really loved her with his whole heart and depended on her entirely.

For many hours a day Carlyle sat in his study working at the magazine articles which were to supply the household with the necessities of life, and pondering over greater works to be written hereafter. As time went by magazine editors began to grow somewhat shy of articles written by Thomas Carlyle. He preached with such terrible energy against the vices of the time—the cant, the shams, the selfishness, the frivolity—that he offended many readers, and the sale of the paper suffered. Nothing that anyone could say to him could persuade him to be less outspoken. It became more and more difficult to find editors who would take what he had written; and so, although he still managed to make enough money to supply the simple wants of the household at Craigenputtock, there was little to put by.

In October 1828 Carlyle wrote an article on “Clothes,” and this, as he noted at the time, contained an idea which required a whole book for its full and proper treatment. He could find no publisher for this article, so he set to work on it again, and from it he built up the book which he called *Sartor Resartus* (*The Tailor Patched*). He invented a character, Herr Teufelsdröckh, who, he said, had written a book on the philosophy of clothes; and he proceeded to give a more or less complete biography of this professor, which was, in many respects, a biography of himself, Thomas Carlyle. Then he went on to give a full account of Teufelsdröckh’s philosophy.

This shows first how dependent man is upon his clothes.

The Horse I ride has his own whole fell: strip him of the girths and flaps and extraneous tags I have fastened round him, and the noble creature is his own sempster and weaver and spinner: nay, his own bootmaker, jeweller, and man-milliner; he bounds free through the valleys with a perennial rainproof court-suit on his body; wherein warmth and easiness of fit have reached perfection; nay, the graces also have been considered, and frills and fringes, with gay variety of colour, featly appended, and ever in the right place, are not wanting. While I—good Heaven!—have thatched myself over with the dead fleeces of sheep, the bark of vegetables,



the entrails of worms, the hides of oxen or seals, the felt of furred beasts. . . .

Often in my atrabiliar moods, when I read of pompous ceremonies, Frankfort Coronations, Royal Drawing-rooms, Levees, Couches; and how the ushers and macers and pursuivants are all in waiting; how Duke this is presented by Archduke that, and Colonel A by General B, and innumerable Bishops, Admirals, and miscellaneous Functionaries, are advancing gallantly to the Anointed Presence; and I strive, in my remote privacy, to form a clear picture of that solemnity—on a sudden, as by some enchanter's wand, the—shall I speak it?—the Clothes fly-off the whole dramatic corps; and Dukes, Grandees, Bishops, Generals, Anointed Presence itself, every mother's son of them stand straddling there, not a shirt on them; and I know not whether to laugh or weep.

He goes on to consider clothes in a wider, less literal fashion. Words are the clothes of thoughts; symbols, such as the king's crown, are the clothes of ideas. Church clothes are the various forms of religion in which men have tried to express their faith. All poets and teachers may be considered as tailors who manufacture out of words the garments in which they set forth their thoughts and beliefs, and man's body is simply the clothing of the invisible spirit which is his real self.

*Sartor Resartus* is a difficult and a puzzling book to read. It is easy to understand why many readers, when, in 1833, the editor of *Frazer's Magazine* was induced to publish it, could make no sense out of it at all, and put down the paper in disgust. The critics had little to say in its favour. One of them went so far as to call it "a mass of clotted nonsense." The editor requested Carlyle to bring the series of articles to a close as quickly as possible, since he could not publish many more instalments without bringing ruin on his paper. The book was, as it seemed, a complete failure.

Yet it contains some of Carlyle's finest passages, which proclaim, clearly and boldly, his message to the world. We will take just one, as an example.

Two men I honour, and no third. First, the toilworn Craftsman that with earth-made Implement laboriously conquers the Earth, and makes her man's. Venerable to me is the hard Hand; crooked, coarse; wherein notwithstanding lies a cunning virtue, indefeasibly



royal, as of the Sceptre of this Planet. Venerable too is the rugged face, all weather-tanned, besoiled, with its rude intelligence; for it is the face of a Man living manlike. Oh, but the more venerable for thy rudeness, and even because we must pity as well as love thee! Hardly-entreated Brother! For us was thy back so bent, for us were thy straight limbs and fingers so deformed: thou wert our Conscript, on whom the lot fell, and fighting our battles wert so marred. For in thee too lay a God-created Form, but it was not to be unfolded; encrusted must it stand with the thick adhesions and defacements of Labour; and thy body, like thy soul, was not to know freedom. Yet toil on, toil on: *thou* art in thy duty, be out of it who may; thou toilest for the altogether indispensable, for daily bread.

A second man I honour, and still more highly: Him who is seen toiling for the spiritually indispensable; not daily bread, but the bread of Life. Is he not too in his duty; endeavouring towards inward Harmony; revealing this, by act or by word, through all his outward endeavours, be they high or low? Highest of all, when his outward and his inward endeavour are one; when we can name him Artist; not earthly Craftsman only, but inspired Thinker, who with heaven-made Implement conquers Heaven for us! If the poor and humble toil that we have Food, must not the high and glorious toil for him in return, that he may have Light, have Guidance, Freedom, Immortality?—These two, in all their degrees, I honour; all else is chaff and dust, which let the wind blow where it listeth.

The winter of 1833–34 passed heavily, and in the spring the Carlyles resolved to take a bold step—give up their home at Craigenputtock, and establish themselves in London. They had saved between two and three hundred pounds; with that they must pay the expenses of their moving, and provide themselves with necessaries until more money came in. It was a desperate venture, but they were both brave and resolute. They took a house in Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, and here Carlyle set to work on a new book. *Sartor Resartus* had frightened the magazine editors so badly that there was little hope that any further articles would be accepted. If the new work did not succeed there was nothing for it, Carlyle thought, but to give up literature entirely, and cross the Atlantic to America with a spade and a pick.

For a time it seemed as if he might be driven to do this, or



something like it. The new book was an historical work on the French Revolution. Months of work and study were necessary before it could be even begun. Carlyle read every book and every document he could find upon the subject, then began to write, slowly and laboriously. His hours of inspiration, when words flowed readily, came seldom; all his books cost him hard and painful effort. Meantime, his small stock of money was dwindling, and not a penny was coming in. He and his wife, though they were living frugally, as the Scottish peasant knows how to live, saw want not so very far off. Yet he would not write the lighter articles, free from denunciation and with less of moral earnestness, for which editors would willingly have given him generous payment. He had a message entrusted to him, and he would deliver it; a work to do, and he would do it. To write merely that he might gain worldly advantage seemed to him a dishonouring of his high calling.

Fresh misfortune came upon him. After many months the first part of his great work was completed, and lent to his friend John Stuart Mill for his judgment and criticism. It was carelessly left about, and burned by an ignorant maid-servant. Mill was utterly broken down by grief and self-reproach; he was not rich, but he insisted on Carlyle taking a sum of money that would help to keep the household going while the work was done over again. Carlyle took the blow like a man. He made no complaint and no lamentation, but sat down doggedly in his study, took up his pen, and started his work once more.

At last the book was finished, and in January 1837 it was published. Just at first it puzzled the English public as *Sartor Resartus* had puzzled them. But it was so full of vivid, picturesque description, scenes and people and events were drawn in such brilliant fashion, that readers forgave the author for his strange style, and for the pages of preaching that came here and there, and read on for sheer interest in the story; until at length they found themselves fascinated by the style, and



reading the preachings with more interest than any other part of the book.

Here is one of his vivid pictures, showing a scene in Paris on the night before the storming of the Bastille:

Meanwhile, the faster, O ye black-aproned Smiths, smite; with strong arm and willing heart. This man and that, all stroke from head to heel, shall thunder alternating, and ply the great forge-hammer, till stithy reel and ring again; while ever and anon, overhead, booms the alarm-cannon,—for the City has now got gun-powder. Pikes are fabricated; fifty thousand of them, in six and thirty hours; judge whether the black-aproned have been idle. Dig trenches, unpave the streets, ye others, assiduous man and maid; cram the earth in barrel-barricades, at each of them a volunteer sentry; pile the whinstones in window-sills and upper rooms. Have scalding pitch, at least boiling water ready, ye weak old women, to pour it and dash it on Royal-Allemand, with your old skinny arms; your shrill curses along with it will not be wanting!—Patrols of the new-born National Guard, bearing torches, scour the streets, all that night; which otherwise are vacant, yet illuminated in every window by order. Strange-looking; like some naphtha-lighted City of the Dead, with here and there a flight of perturbed Ghosts.

*The French Revolution* was a great success, and Carlyle at last had the satisfaction of knowing that his message was being sounded far and wide, and that what, at least for a time, had been driven from his door.

The message was the same as the message of *Sartor Resartus*: “Love not pleasure; love God”; “Nothing great can be built on a sham”; “Work only is noble.” All these things the French had disregarded, and they must reap as they had sown. No one man, and no one class of men, says Carlyle, was to be blamed for the miseries of the Revolution.

Friends! it was every scoundrel that had lived, and quack-like pretended to be doing, and been only eating and *mis-doing*, in all provinces of life, as Shoebblack or as Sovereign Lord, each in his degree, from the time of Charlemagne and earlier. All this (for be sure no falsehood perishes, but is as seed sown out to grow) has been storing itself for thousands of years; and now the account-day has come. And rude will the settlement be: of wrath laid up against the day of wrath. O my Brother, be not thou a Quack!



Die rather, if thou wilt take counsel; 'tis but dying once, and thou art quit of it forever.

The worst of the struggle was now over, and though life never became easy, either to Carlyle or to his wife, they had all the happiness that fame, and many friends, and a sufficient income could give them. To their pleasant Chelsea house came most of the notable people of the time—Tennyson and Dickens and Thackeray, James Anthony Froude, the historian, John Stuart Mill, the political economist, Mazzini, the Italian reformer. Among the great body of readers in the country Carlyle's fame rose steadily. Each book as it appeared was read with almost the reverence given to inspired words. *The Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell* came in 1845, *Past and Present* and *Frederick the Great* in 1865; and he wrote besides a large number of essays and pamphlets. He was called the Sage of Chelsea, not in fun or derision, but in real, sober, reverent earnest. Young men and women all over the country owned him as their spiritual guide.

The book of Carlyle's that I think you would like best is *On Heroes and Hero-worship and the Heroic in History*. It contains a series of six lectures which he gave in London in 1840, and it illustrates one of his most firmly held beliefs—the belief in the power and influence of individuals, especially of those who rise high above their fellows. "For, as I take it," he says, "Universal History, the history of what man has accomplished in this world, is at bottom the History of the Great Men who have worked here." He takes the hero as Divinity, as Prophet, as Poet, as Priest, as Man of Letters, and as King; and uses as illustrations Odin, Mahomet, Dante, Shakespeare, Luther, Knox, Johnson, Rousseau, Burns, Cromwell, and Napoleon. It is a fascinating book, and full of fine and noble thoughts.

Carlyle lived to be a very old man, and to do a full and splendid life's work. His wife died in 1866 and left him very sad and lonely. He still lived in the Cheyne Walk house, and still worked almost with the ardour of his youth. He was in



the midst of writing his *Reminiscences* when, on February 5, 1881, he died.

(b) *Ruskin*

At the time when Thomas Carlyle was fleeing from the noise and distractions of Edinburgh to lonely Craigenputtock the second of the Victorian prophets was a fair-haired, blue-eyed, nine-year-old boy, living with his father and mother in a big, well-ordered house at Herne Hill. His parents were as devoutly pious as were the parents of Thomas Carlyle, and, like them, they desired earnestly that their son should become a minister of the Church. Their hopes rose even higher. John, they thought, might one day be a bishop. He must be carefully trained for this high calling; and there probably never was a child whose life, in every particular, was ordered with more strict and watchful care than was the life of little John Ruskin. For him there was no running barefoot over the heather, no sitting side by side with strange boys in school, no tending of cattle, no boyish trials of endurance. He was an only child, and he was allowed no playmates, because his anxious mother feared they might set him a bad example. He did not go to school, but was taught at home, first by his mother, and afterward by tutors. When his lessons were over he played in the large, beautiful garden belonging to the house. When he went for a walk his nurse or his mother was always with him, and he was not allowed to go near deep water or into a field where cattle were feeding, for fear of accidents. Yet with all this, care was taken that he should not grow up a pampered or an unmanly boy. He was kept under the strictest discipline, and no excuse was taken for idleness or disobedience. He was whipped when he was naughty, and in Mrs Ruskin's eyes many things were naughty that less strict mothers might consider only childish. There was luxury in the big house, but it was not for him. His food was of the very plainest; he remembered vividly when he was a man two occasions when he had been granted a rare indulgence—one



when his mother had given him three raisins from her store cupboard, another when he had been allowed to finish a custard made for his father's dinner. In small things as in greater ones John Ruskin learned to live according to the article in Thomas Carlyle's creed that said, "Love not pleasure; love God."

At a certain fixed hour each morning the little boy came down from his nursery to do his lessons with his mother. They read each day a portion of the Bible, beginning at the first chapter of Genesis, going steadily on until they reached the last chapter of the Revelation, and then beginning again. They missed out nothing—hard words, genealogies, lists of names—they read them all. In this way the boy grew up in close and reverent familiarity with the Holy Scriptures. There could be no better training for an author. Ugly or careless or wordy expressions would be hateful to one in whose ears the grand and lovely cadences of the Bible were always sounding.

In the afternoon John went for a walk; in the evening he sat with his parents, listening while his father read aloud, or reading to himself; and when half-past seven came he said good-night and went to bed. All through the year this daily round went on with little change, until June came and brought the great annual holiday. Mr Ruskin was a wine-merchant, and each year he made a journey through different parts of England to visit his customers and gather in orders. His wife and his son went with him. They travelled in a comfortable carriage, with post-horses, and stopped each night at an inn. In this way John learned to know and love the woods and meadows, mountains and lakes and rivers, and all the lovely countryside that is the heritage of English boys and girls. Later the tours were extended to France, Belgium, and Switzerland, and the beauty-loving boy first saw the Alps, about which, later, he was to write with such enthusiasm. He saw also the pictures in the foreign galleries, and studied them as he had already studied the works in the great collections at



home. He loved beauty of all kinds—beauty of nature and beauty of art. He was never tired of looking at pictures, and was eager to learn all he could about them. His parents gave him the best art master they could find, and he worked hard at drawing. He could copy exquisitely, but he could produce no original work, and there was no chance of his ever becoming an artist, which was what he himself wished to be.

In writing he was more successful. He had begun writing verses when he was a small boy of seven, and had since filled many notebooks—which his mother carefully preserved—with his compositions. Before he was sixteen he began to contribute to various magazines. The most interesting thing that he wrote in those early years was an article that was never published. In 1836 there appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine* an attack on the painter Turner, making fun of his paintings, and ridiculing his claim to be called an artist. John Ruskin, then a boy of seventeen, was filled with fiery indignation. He had been given a volume of poems by Rogers which contained many small engravings by Turner, and these so delighted him that he had taken every opportunity to study the artist's work. He felt that he understood it far better than did the critic who had made the attack; and in great wrath he sat down and wrote a vehement defence of the painter. When it was finished he sent it to Turner for his approval; but Turner thought it best to take no notice of his critics, and so the paper was never published. Ruskin never forgot it, and one of his most famous books, *Modern Painters*, is founded upon the ideas of this early paper.

In 1836 Ruskin went up to Oxford as a gentleman commoner. At this time he was a tall, delicate lad of seventeen, with bright, expressive blue eyes, curling brown hair, and a shy manner. At first he was laughed at as a "girl," but soon his companions saw he had really fine and manly qualities, though he looked so quiet and gentle. His mother still watched over him with anxious care, even though he was nearly a man. She left her beautiful home, and took lodgings in Oxford while



he was there, and every evening John dutifully visited and took tea with her.

His fond parents, he says, had made up their minds that he should "take all the prizes every year, and a double first to finish with; marry Lady Clara Vere de Vere; write poetry as good as Byron's, only pious; preach sermons as good as Bossuet's, only Protestant; be made at forty Bishop of Winchester, and at fifty Primate of England." He did none of these things. He won the Newdigate Prize, but a breakdown in health prevented him from taking any other honours at the university. To the grievous disappointment of his parents he decided that he was not suited to become a clergyman. He did not quite know for what he was suited, and for a time he dreamed happily among his pictures and his books, with journeys to his beloved Alps as a crowning delight.

Up to this time Ruskin had had very little to do with the world outside his own small circle. He had read about the great movements of the time, the industrial question, the condition of the poorer classes, the effect of scientific discoveries on religious thought; but the doubts and difficulties that had tormented Carlyle's unhappy youth had not troubled him in his sheltered life. His strongest feeling had been his intense love of beauty, and since every opportunity of studying beautiful things had been given him he had asked for little more. Now, the wish that other people should see and love the things he found so fair began to move him strongly. The attack on Turner that had appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine* had shown him how blind some people could be; and the young man of twenty-one began to consider seriously if it were not his mission to open their eyes.

In 1843 he published the first volume of *Modern Painters*, the second following in 1846. The book was meant in the first place to be a defence of Turner against his critics, but its author's enthusiasm for his subject caused it to grow into a treatise on painting in general. Ruskin tried to make his readers see something of the beauty that he himself saw in



clouds and sunshine, mountains and water and flowers and grass, and to see also the beauty of great pictures in which these things were represented.

He made wonderful word-pictures of the places he had visited in his travels. The following passage is an example:

As I climbed the long slope of the Alban Mount, the storm swept finally to the north, and the noble outline of the domes of Albano, and graceful darkness of its ilex grove, rose against pure streaks of alternate blue and amber; the upper sky gradually flushing through the last fragments of rain-cloud in deep, palpitating azure, half æther and half dew. The noonday sun came slanting down the rocky slopes of La Riccia, and their masses of entangled and tall foliage, whose autumnal tints were mixed with the rich verdure of a thousand evergreens, were penetrated with it as with rain. I cannot call it colour, it was conflagration. Purple, and crimson, and scarlet, like the curtains of God's tabernacle, the rejoicing trees sank into the valley in showers of light, every separate leaf quivering with buoyant and burning life; each, as it turned to reflect or to transmit the sunbeam, first a torch and then an emerald. Far up into the recesses of the valley, the green vistas arched like the hollows of mighty waves of some crystalline sea, with the arbutus flowers dashed along their flanks for foam, and silver flakes of orange spray tossed into the air around them, breaking over the grey walls of rock into a thousand separate stars, fading and kindling alternately as the weak wind lifted and let them fall. Every glade of grass burned like the golden floor of heaven.

Not all of us have the chance of seeing splendours such as these, but wherever we live there are, Ruskin says, beauties enough, if we would only take the trouble to look for them.

Who . . . can tell me of the chain of tall white mountains that girded the horizon at noon yesterday? Who saw the narrow sunbeam that came out of the south and smote upon their summits until they melted and mouldered away in a dust of blue rain? Who saw the dust of the dead clouds when the sunlight left them last night, and the west wind blew them before it like withered leaves?

In the same vivid way he describes such pictures as he calls great, especially the pictures of Turner. He has a wonderful description of Turner's *The Slave Ship*, in which he shows how every detail in the painting of the scene—the sky, the sea, the



light—helps to heighten the impression of ghastly horror given by the whole picture.

*Modern Painters* made Ruskin famous, but fame did not satisfy him. He had written the book from a sense of duty—the feeling that he must do the thing he ought, however hard and disagreeable it might be, that his childhood's training had made so strong. It was his duty to awaken England to a sense of the beauty that was to be found in the world, and help her to worship God truly by seeing Him manifested in these His great works. It was with this aim that he wrote his next books, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* and *The Stones of Venice*.

As he went on with his work, and as he saw more of the people for whom he wrote, he believed that he saw the reason why men's eyes were blind to the beauty around them. He read the works of Carlyle and became the prophet's enthusiastic disciple, and he began to preach much the same gospel that Carlyle was preaching, except that he made the idea of beauty the central theme of his teaching. Men, he said, were too much occupied with the material things of the world, and cared little for the spiritual; money was the reward for which all men looked. Everything was sacrificed to money-getting. Brotherly love was forgotten, and honour was little more than a name. From this followed all sorts of evils in the world of industry. Employers oppressed their workmen, workmen scamped their work. Joy and pride in making things that were beautiful and useful were gone; men thought only of the money their toil would bring. For the rest of his life Ruskin occupied himself chiefly in trying to teach men how these terrible ills could be cured. He taught by means of books and lectures and example. In 1854 he became a lecturer at the Working Men's Institute, founded by Frederick Denison Maurice and Charles Kingsley. He taught there for four years, and gave generous help in money and in books. He lectured also in Oxford and Cambridge and other large towns, and he took part in all the movements of the time whose object was to bring opportunities for higher education within



the reach of the working classes. He became a personal friend of Thomas Carlyle's, and the two talked eagerly of their hopes for England's future. He wrote many books, nearly all of them dealing with social reform. "I grew daily more sure," he wrote toward the end of his long life, when in his peaceful home by Lake Coniston he looked back on the years that had gone, "that the peace of God rested on all the dutiful and kindly hearts of the laborious poor; and the only constant form of pure religion was in useful work, faithful love, and stintless charity."

### III. THE POETS

#### (a) *Tennyson*

When Queen Victoria came to the throne in 1837 the only famous poet in England was William Wordsworth, and he was an old man of sixty-seven, living a quiet, retired life in Westmorland. His best poems had been written many years before, but they had only lately become at all popular; and it was not until Queen Victoria had been two years on the throne that he was publicly accepted as the greatest poet of his age. Then Oxford University bestowed on him the degree of doctor, and undergraduates whose fathers had joined in the laughter and ridicule that had met the *Lyrical Ballads* and *The Excursion* applauded him with wild enthusiasm.

Yet Wordsworth is not really a Victorian poet. His work was shaped by the forces of an earlier period. The two poets—Alfred Tennyson and Robert Browning—who were to speak for that generation were, in 1837, young and little known. Robert Browning was twenty-five years old, and was living with his father and mother in a comfortable, middle-class home at Camberwell. He had already written two poems, *Pauline* and *Paracelsus*, which, although the public had taken little notice of them, had brought him the friendship of Wordsworth and Dickens and Carlyle. Alfred Tennyson, three years older, was living with his widowed mother and his sister at



Somersby, in Lincolnshire, reading, writing poetry, and taking long walks across the wide pastures and the low grey hills of that wind-swept country. Six years had passed since he had left Cambridge, and yet he had no settled occupation; and some of his friends were getting anxious, fearing that Alfred was wasting the great powers that they knew he possessed, and that they had hoped would help him to make a great name in the world. Ten years before this time he and his brother Charles had published a volume of verses called *Poems by Two Brothers*, which had seemed to give promise of splendid things to follow; and in 1830 and 1832 Alfred had published two more volumes, which contain some of the great poems by which he is remembered to-day—*Ænone*, *The Palace of Art*, *A Dream of Fair Women*—so that his friends had some reason for their disappointment when the years passed and nothing followed this wonderful beginning.

At Cambridge Alfred Tennyson had won the Chancellor's English Medal with a blank-verse poem on Timbuctoo, and this, with other verses that he wrote at college, had been passed about among his intimate friends. He belonged at Cambridge to a little group of students known as the "Apostles," almost all of whom, in their after lives, became famous. They were all highly gifted in one direction or another, and each of them had an ardent desire to help and reform the world. All sorts of subjects—social, moral, religious, historical, literary—were eagerly discussed by them. Alfred Tennyson was a notable figure in this assembly. The Tennyson brothers could never be overlooked, even if it were only because of their personal appearance. Alfred especially was a striking figure, tall and finely built, with a noble head, and dark, waving hair, and deep eyes looking out from a beautiful, sad face. All the Tennysons had a streak of melancholy in their natures, and were subject to fits of almost despairing gloom, although they could be gay and companionable enough when the dark mood was not on them.

It was partly this disposition to melancholy that kept Alfred



Tennyson passive, and, as it seemed, idle, during the years that followed his leaving the university. Like Carlyle, he was full of doubts and misgivings. He saw the evils of the world very clearly, and saw no remedy for them. He was intensely interested in the discoveries of science, but was troubled because they seemed to conflict with the truths of the Christian religion.

Another reason for the gloom of these years was the death of Arthur Hallam, the most brilliant of the Cambridge group, and Tennyson's closest friend. All the family at Somersby loved Arthur Hallam, and when, in 1832, he became engaged to Tennyson's sister Emily there was great rejoicing. In September 1833 he went to Vienna with his father, and there he died quite suddenly, through the rupture of a blood-vessel on the brain. To the Tennyson household this was a most grievous blow. It was years before Alfred recovered from it, and his deep, heart-breaking grief is shown in the poem that he began to write at this time in memory of his dead friend. The poem took many years to write; he worked at it at intervals, when his sorrow came upon him in fresh force, and he felt some comfort in putting it into the most poignant, most beautiful words his poet's soul could find.

The years went on, and still Tennyson took no part in active life. He wrote, but he did not publish. He rambled about the country by himself, or with one of the friends of his college days. He lived simply and plainly, hating luxuries. Sometimes he came up to London, and there he made friends with Carlyle and Thackeray and Dickens and Leigh Hunt and other notable men. Thomas Carlyle was attracted at once by the handsome, melancholy young poet, whom he described as

a man solitary and sad, as certain men are, dwelling in an element of gloom. . . . One of the finest-looking men in the world—a great shock of rough, dusky dark hair; bright, laughing hazel eyes; massive aquiline face, most massive yet most delicate; of sallow brown complexion, almost Indian looking; clothes cynically loose, free-and-easy, smokes infinite tobacco. His voice is musical, metallic, fit for loud laughter and piercing wail, and all that may lie between; speech and speculation free and plenteous. I do not



meet in these late decades such company over a pipe. We shall see what he will grow to.

At the end of 1837 the Tennysons left Somersby, and after living for a time at High Beech and at Tunbridge Wells they settled, in 1840, at Boxley, near Maidstone. Alfred was writing steadily now; and by 1842 there were enough poems to make a small volume. He went up to London, and there, with the help of some old college friends—who had, most of them, while he had been dreaming and writing, made for themselves a name and position—the poems were revised for publication. Everyone who saw them was enthusiastic in praising them. “He will publish such a volume as has never been published since the time of Keats,” declared his friend Edward Fitzgerald, “and which, once published, will never be suffered to die.”

The poems came out in two volumes toward the end of the year. The general reading public took little notice of it, but true poetry lovers agreed that here was a new and a great poet arisen among them. Some of Tennyson’s finest poems are to be found in these volumes, and many of his friends held that he never rose quite as high in any of his later works. Most of the earlier poems were included, and there were many new ones. Some of them—*The May Queen*, *The Talking Oak*, *The Lady of Shalott*, and others—I expect you have read, and perhaps know by heart, and you will have noticed how smoothly and beautifully the verses flow on, and how to hear them read aloud is like listening to a strain of sweet music. Tennyson had pondered them long, putting into them the deepest thoughts of his heart; had worked at them, altering and reshaping again and again until they were as nearly perfect as he could make them. “Truly,” said Carlyle, “it is long since in any English book, Poetry or Prose, I have felt the pulse of a real man’s heart as I do in this same.”

Among the most famous of the 1842 poems are *Locksley Hall*, *The Two Voices*, *Ulysses*, *The Lotos-eaters*, *Ænone*, *Sir Launcelot* and *Queen Guinevere*, and *Morte d’Arthur*. There are



besides many marvellously beautiful short poems; there is the wonderful *Break, break, break*, and there is *The Poet's Song*, which I will quote in full as an illustration of the musical quality of Tennyson's verse:

The rain had fallen, the Poet arose,  
He pass'd by the town and out of the street,  
A light wind blew from the gates of the sun,  
And waves of shadow went over the wheat,  
And he sat him down in a lonely place,  
And chanted a melody loud and sweet,  
That made the wild-swan pause in her cloud,  
And the lark drop down at his feet.

The swallow stopt as he hunted the fly,  
The snake slipt under a spray,  
The wild hawk stood with the down on his beak,  
And stared, with his foot on the prey,  
And the nightingale thought, "I have sung many songs,  
But never a one so gay,  
For he sings of what the world will be  
When the years have died away."

Here is a verse from *Ænone* which sums up much of his teaching:

Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,  
These three alone lead life to sovereign power.  
Yet not for power (power of herself  
Would come uncall'd for), but to live by law,  
Acting the law we live by without fear;  
And, because right is right, to follow right  
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence.

The poems brought Tennyson a good deal of fame, but little money, and this was a great disappointment to him, for he was engaged to a Miss Emily Sellwood, and it was impossible for them to marry until he could earn a sufficient income by his writings. He invested his small capital in a wood-carving company, which seemed to promise a good return, but the company failed, and his money was lost. This disappointment threw him into one of his blackest fits of gloom, and he became really ill, so that his family persuaded him to try the hydropathic treatment at Cheltenham. While he was there a letter came from Sir Robert Peel, the Prime



Minister, telling him that a pension of £200 had been conferred upon him by the Crown. For a time Tennyson hesitated as to whether he could accept it, but he was at length persuaded by his friends to do so. "Something in that word 'pension,' " he said, "sticks in my gizzard; it is only the name, and perhaps would smell 'sweeter' by some other. Well, I suppose I ought in a manner to be grateful."

He began now to work steadily and hard. The time of preparation was over, and he was ready to give his poetry to the world. He still wrote and rewrote, and was not satisfied until each poem was as beautiful and full of music as he could make it. In 1847 he published *The Princess*, which is a fanciful story of a princess who founded a college for women only, and wrote above the gate, "Let no man enter in on pain of death." The prince of a neighbouring country, who had been betrothed to the Princess, though he had never seen her, resolved to penetrate into this college, and set off, with two friends. They disguised themselves as women, and were admitted as students of the college; and, though they were soon discovered, all ended happily. The Prince won his bride, and his friends also found brides among her maidens. The work, as a whole, does not reach Tennyson's highest standard of poetry, but the songs that are scattered through it are of his very best. Here are two verses from one of them:

The splendour falls on castle walls  
And snowy summits old in story;  
The long light shakes across the lakes,  
And the wild cataract leaps in glory.  
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,  
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O hark, O hear! how thin and clear,  
And thinner, clearer, farther going!  
O sweet and far from cliff and scar  
The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!  
Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying:  
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

In 1850 came *In Memoriam*, the marvellous record of a great



friendship and a great grief, at which Tennyson had been working ever since Arthur Hallam's death in 1833.

I sometimes hold it half a sin  
To put in words the grief I feel;  
For words, like Nature, half reveal  
And half conceal the Soul within.

But, for the unquiet heart and brain,  
A use in measured language lies;  
The sad mechanic exercise,  
Like dull narcotics, numbing pain.

In words, like weeds, I'll wrap me o'er,  
Like coarsest clothes against the cold;  
But that large grief which these enfold  
Is given in outline and no more.

My Arthur, whom I shall not see  
Till all my widow'd race be run;  
Dear as the mother to the son,  
More than my brothers are to me.

*In Memoriam* is a very long poem, for Tennyson goes over the whole course of their friendship, and dwells with sad pleasure on the different incidents connected with it.

I past beside the reverend walls  
In which of old I wore the gown;  
I roved at random through the town,  
And saw the tumult of the halls;

And caught once more the distant shout,  
The measured pulse of racing oars  
Among the willows; paced the shores  
And many a bridge, and all about

The same gray flats again, and felt  
The same, but not the same; and last  
Up that long walk of limes I past  
To see the rooms in which he dwelt.

Another name was on the door:  
I linger'd; all within was noise  
Of songs, and clapping hands, and boys  
That crash'd the glass and beat the floor;

Where once we held debate, a band  
Of youthful friends, on mind and art,  
And labour, and the changing mart,  
And all the framework of the land.



In the years that had passed since 1842 English readers had come to a fuller and better knowledge of Tennyson's poetry. The 1842 volume had made its way all over the country, and had brought beauty and joy to hundreds of people who were neither very clever nor very learned, but who could hear the marvellous music of the verses, and feel themselves uplifted by the high thoughts that they expressed. Both *The Princess* and *In Memoriam* were received with enthusiasm, and one result of this was that enough money came in to enable Tennyson to marry. In June 1850 he and Miss Sellwood were married; and after that his circumstances improved with each year. When Wordsworth died in April 1850 Tennyson was appointed Poet Laureate. By 1853 his income was large enough to allow him to take a house in the country, and he settled at Farringford in the Isle of Wight. It was within sight and sound of the sea, and to the left rose the breezy, beautiful Downs. It was secluded enough to satisfy Tennyson's love of retirement, and yet not too far from books and publishers. In this home he lived for forty years, and there he wrote many of his most famous works.

Tennyson had two sons, Hallam, born in 1852, and Lionel, in 1854. The elder son, in his *Memoirs* of his father, has told us about the life at Farringford during his early years:

My father and mother settled to a country life at once, looking after their little farm, and tending the poor and sick of the village. In the afternoon they swept up leaves, mowed the grass, gravelled the walks, and he built what he called "a bower of rushes" in the kitchen garden. The primroses and snowdrops and other flowers were a constant delight, and he began a flower dictionary. He also bought spy-glasses, through which he might watch the ways and movements of the birds in the ilexes, cedar, and fir-trees. Geology, too, he took up, and trudged out with the local geologist, Keeping, on many a long expedition. . . .

If it was rainy or stormy and we were kept indoors, he often built cities for us with bricks, or played battledore and shuttlecock; or sometimes he read Grimm's *Fairy Stories* or repeated ballads to us. . . . On feast days he would blow bubbles, and then grow excited over "the gorgeous colours and landscapes, and the planets breaking off from their suns, and the single star becoming a double



star" which he saw in these bubbles; or if it were evening he would help us to act from some well-known play. . . . My father was always interested in the imaginative views which we children took of our surroundings. Of these I may give one instance; how Lionel had been brought from his bed at night, wrapt in a blanket, to see the great comet, and suddenly awaking and looking out at the starry night, asked, "Am I dead?"

The first poem written in the new home was *Maud*, Tennyson's own favourite among all his works. He wrote it, his son says,

morning and evening, sitting in his hard, high-backed wooden chair in his little room at the top of the house. His "sacred pipes," as he called them, were half an hour after breakfast and half an hour after dinner, when no one was allowed to be with him, for then his best thoughts came to him. As he made the different poems he would repeat or read them. During his "sacred half hours" and his other working-hours, and even on the Downs, he would murmur his new passages or new lines as they came to him, a habit that had always been his since boyhood, and which had caused the Somersby cook to say, "What is Master Awlfred always a-praying for?"

In his next great work Tennyson went back to the old subject that has attracted so many writers—the story of King Arthur. He had already written two poems on Launcelot and Guinevere and the death of Arthur; now he planned a series of poems dealing with the whole story. His aim was very much the same as Spenser's had been, though he expressed it a little differently. King Arthur "is meant to be a man who spent himself in the cause of honour, duty, and self-sacrifice, who felt and aspired with his nobler knights, though with a stronger and a clearer conscience than any of them, 'reverencing his conscience as his King.'" Tennyson's ideal knight of the nineteenth century is, naturally, very different from Spenser's ideal knight of the sixteenth, and there are critics who say that, in attempting to tell the old story in a new way, Tennyson has lost the spirit of the original and has produced something that is more like a pretty fairy-tale than a history of real men and women. There is some truth in the criticism; Tennyson's Arthur is, it must be confessed, not much like the



ancient British chief. Yet the *Idylls of the King* have a beauty and a value of their own. The general idea on which they are founded is a lofty and a noble one. "We needs must love the highest when we see it," says Tennyson, and he tries throughout the poems to show the highest as being worthy of love.

*Merlin and Vivien*, which was to form one of the series, was finished by the end of March 1856. *Geraint and Enid* was next begun, and finished during an expedition to Wales toward the end of the summer. "The Usk murmurs by the windows," Tennyson wrote, "and I sit like King Arthur in Caerleon." On July 9, 1857, Mrs Tennyson entered in her diary, "Alfred has brought me as a birthday-present the first two lines he has made of *Guinevere*, which might be the nucleus of a great poem"; and on March 15, 1858, *Guinevere* was completed.

Toward the end of the summer of 1859 the first four idylls were published. The book had an immense success, ten thousand copies being sold in the first week. Tennyson had at last become a popular poet.

No more of the idylls were published for ten years; then in 1869 came *The Holy Grail*, *The Coming of Arthur*, *Pelleas and Ettarre*, and *The Passing of Arthur*. Three years later came *The Last Tournament* and *Gareth and Lynette*; then, after thirteen years, the last of the series, *Balin and Balan*, appeared.

During all these years the enthusiasm for Tennyson's poetry was growing. Young people especially rejoiced in it. The message that he had to give seemed a message for them in particular, meant to help them in their perplexities.

Let knowledge grow from more to more,  
But more of reverence in us dwell;  
That mind and soul, according well,  
May make one music as before.

The old order changeth, yielding place to new,  
And God fulfils himself in many ways.

Not once or twice in our rough island-story,  
The path of duty was the way to glory.



## THE GOLDEN ROAD IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

---

Love thou thy land, with love far-brought  
From out the storied Past, and used  
Within the Present, but transfused  
Thro' future time by power of thought.

By the time the *Idylls of the King* was completed Tennyson was over seventy years old. He had written many other poems besides those we have spoken of here, and he was still writing, eagerly and steadily. He had turned to a new kind of composition, and during the last twelve years of his life he produced three historical dramas in blank verse—*Queen Mary*, *Harold*, and *Becket*. In 1884 he was created Baron Tennyson of Freshwater and Aldworth. His popularity rose higher and higher, until he became almost the idol of the English people, and there was general mourning when, on October 6, 1892, at the age of eighty-three, he died. His last lyric, *Crossing the Bar*, which he wrote when he was eighty, has all the beauty and grace of the great lyrics of his youth:

Sunset and evening star,  
And one clear call for me!  
And may there be no moaning of the bar,  
When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,  
Too full for sound and foam,  
When that which drew from out the boundless deep  
Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,  
And after that the dark!  
And may there be no sadness of farewell,  
When I embark;

For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place  
The flood may bear me far,  
I hope to see my Pilot face to face  
When I have crost the bar.

### (b) Browning

The years that Alfred Tennyson had spent reading and dreaming at Somersby and preparing himself for his great work as a poet had been years of preparation for Robert



Browning also. He did not go to Oxford or Cambridge, but attended classes in Greek and Latin at London University, and in medicine at Guy's Hospital. The rest of his education he gained by reading. He had read enormously ever since he was a small boy. He was interested in all sorts of subjects, and devoured every book he came across. "I was studying the Grammar of Music," he said, "when most children are learning the Multiplication Table." When he was fourteen years old his mother gave him the works of Shelley and of Keats; and he read these with such intense enjoyment that it seemed to him as if the spirits of the two dead poets were hovering near him. Behind his father's house was a pleasant, old-fashioned garden, and as the boy walked there in the soft darkness of a May evening he heard a nightingale singing in a golden laburnum-tree, and another answering from a ruddy copper-beech in a garden close by. The conviction came to him that these were the spirits of Shelley and Keats, called up by the passionate adoration of their new worshipper. No wonder that when, toward the end of his life, somebody said to him, "There is no romance now except in Italy," he answered, remembering the splendid dreams of those far-off days, "Ah, well, I should like to include poor old Camberwell."

From that time his mind was made up that he would be a poet; and his father, who was himself a highly gifted man, and was very fond and proud of his clever, handsome son, was ready to do all he could to help him. It was long before Robert Browning received a penny for his poetry, and during all those years his father supported him with ready generosity.

In disposition Browning was very unlike Tennyson. His nature was as hopeful and confident as the other poet's was melancholy and doubting. He had no black moods, and he refused to be depressed even when things went wrong and the outlook was very dark. He was ardent, enthusiastic, and impetuous. He had great bodily strength, and his health was



perfect. He rode and danced and sang and boxed; he was interested in everything, and enjoyed even those experiences which many people might call hardships. The young man who strode over Wimbledon Common, his head uplifted, his dark hair tossed by the wind, his grey eyes shining, reciting aloud grand passages from Isaiah—who stopped Carlyle when that great man was out riding to tell him, in an outburst of glowing eloquence, how much he delighted in *Sartor Resartus*—was deeply interested also in the fit of his lemon-coloured kid gloves, and in the quality of the wine he drank at dinner. His robust, almost tempestuous, enjoyment of life included small things as well as great.

Browning did not, as Tennyson did, ponder over his poems word by word, spending endless labour and pains in bringing them to perfection. Ideas rushed into his mind so quickly that before he could write one down in clear and intelligible fashion another had come to claim his attention. He poured out a flood of words whose meaning it was very difficult for a reader to understand; the richness of his imagery and the splendour of his conceptions often only helped to make his poems more confused in expression. He did not revise them with the care they needed; their meaning was clear to him, and that was enough.

Thus it happened that a long poem called *Sordello*, which he published in 1840, brought him nothing but reproaches. Its scene was laid in Italy, and it had to do with the struggle between two opposing parties of the Middle Ages, the Guelphs and the Ghibellines. Most readers found it then—as most readers still find it—hopelessly obscure. Browning himself, in later life, spoke of it as “quite unintelligible.” To the general public it seemed like another *Sartor Resartus*, made even more unintelligible by being put into verse. Even the most intelligent readers found the poem difficult. Carlyle wrote to Browning saying that Mrs Carlyle had read it with great interest, and would be very glad if the author would tell her whether *Sordello* was a man, a city, or a book.



The year after *Sordello* came another poem by Robert Browning, published in the form of a sixpenny pamphlet, the first of a series called *Bells and Pomegranates*. If Browning had been bent on showing his critics that he could write as plainly as anyone when he chose he could not have done it better than by means of this poem, which he called *Pippa Passes*. It is very unlikely, however, that he thought about the critics at all; he wrote according to the mood of the moment. He was filled always with love for his fellow-men, and a desire to serve them, and sometimes this love rose to a passion, and a vision arose before him of what could be done, unconsciously and simply, by one pure and loving soul passing among sinful, troubled men. Browning believed in love. To him it was the worker of all miracles. So he wrote *Pippa Passes* to show how love might make a poor, obscure little maid the means of bringing help to sorely tried and tempted people who did not so much as know of her existence.

Pippa is a little Italian peasant girl, who worked in the silk mills at Asolo. She had one day's holiday in the year—New Year's Day—on which she was free, and could do as she liked. This precious day shone out for her among all the others as if its minutes were made of gold. It must be used and enjoyed to the uttermost.

Oh, Day, if I squander a wavelet of thee,  
A mite of my twelve-hours' treasure,  
The least of thy gazes or glances  
(Be they grants thou art bound to, or gifts above measure),  
One of thy choices, or one of thy chances  
(Be they tasks God imposed thee, or freaks at thy pleasure),  
—My Day, if I squander such labour or leisure,  
Then shame fall on Asolo, mischief on me! . . .  
For, Day, my holiday, if thou ill-usest  
Me, who am only Pippa, old-year's sorrow,  
Cast off last night, will come again to-morrow—  
Whereas, if thou prove gentle, I shall borrow  
Sufficient strength of thee for new year's sorrow.

So the child talks on happily, comparing her lot with the lot of those who can have holidays when they please. What would



it be like, she wonders, to be one of these people—to be, for example, one of Asolo's Four Happiest Ones—"great haughty Ottima," who is beloved by Sebald; Jules, who is that day to marry Phene; Luigi, with the mother he adores and who adores him; Monsignor, high and holy, who is coming from Rome to Asolo to say Masses for the souls of those in Purgatory.

The fancy comes into her head that she will connect her holiday with these Four Happiest Ones.

For am I not, this day,  
Whate'er I please? What shall I please to-day?  
My morning, noon, eve, and night—how spend my day?  
To-morrow I must be Pippa who winds silk,  
The whole year round, to earn just bread and milk;  
But, this one day, I have leave to go,  
And play out my fancy's fullest games;  
I may fancy all day—and it shall be so—  
That I taste of the pleasures, am called by the names  
Of the Happiest Four in our Asolo!

"For see," says Pippa, "what does New-year's hymn declare?"

All service ranks the same with God:  
If now, as formerly He trod  
Paradise, His presence fills  
Our earth, each only as God wills  
Can work—God's puppets, best and worst,  
Are we: there is no last nor first.

So she sets out, singing as she goes. She passes by each of the Four Happiest Ones just at the moment when each has to decide some great question of right or wrong, and by her song she unconsciously influences their actions.

The year's at the spring,  
And day's at the morn;  
Morning's at seven;  
The hill-side's dew-pearled;  
The lark's on the wing;  
The snail's on the thorn;  
God's in His heaven—  
All's right with the world.

Thus sings Pippa, with other songs that sound just the right



note to touch the Four Happiest Ones. At night, back in her solitary room, she thinks over the day's happenings, never dreaming that they have been of importance to anyone except herself; least of all does she dream of having influenced the Four Happiest Ones.

Now, one thing I should like to really know:  
 How near I ever might approach all these  
 I only fancied being, this long day:  
 —Approach, I mean, so as to touch them, so  
 As to . . . in some way . . . move them—if you please,  
 Do good or evil to them some slight way.  
 For instance, if I wind  
 Silk to-morrow, my silk may bind  
 And broider Ottima's cloak's hem.  
 Ah, me and my important part with them,  
 This morning's hymn half promised when I rose!  
 True in some sense or other, I suppose. . . .  
 God bless me! I can pray no more to-night.  
 No doubt, some way or other, hymns say right.  
 All service is the same with God—  
 With God, whose puppets, best and worst,  
 Are we: there is no last nor first.

Very few people bought *Pippa Passes*, even though they could get it for the small sum of sixpence. Browning was quite out of favour with the English reading public; they had not forgotten *Sordello*. The strange title—*Bells and Pomegranates*—of the series in which it had appeared was, people felt, another reason for distrusting the poem. What could be the meaning of such a title? Had it any meaning at all? Was it a deliberate attempt to mystify the readers? What could be expected from any work with so ridiculous a name? It was not until the eighth and last of the series was published that Browning explained the meaning of the title he had chosen. It was taken from the description given in the Book of Exodus of the robe of the high priest. "And beneath upon the hem of it, thou shalt make pomegranates of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, round about the hem thereof; and bells of gold between them round about." "I meant by that title," explained Browning, "to indicate an endeavour towards something



like an alternation, or mixture, of music with discoursing, sound with sense, poetry with thought; which looks too ambitious so expressed, so the symbol was preferred."

Browning was not discouraged by the ill-success of *Pippa Passes*. He went on with more *Bells and Pomegranates*: in 1842 came a tragedy, *King Charles*, and a collection of sixteen short poems called *Dramatic Lyrics*. One of these was *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, which I expect you know very well. Browning wrote it for the little son of Mr Macready, the famous actor. The boy had a long illness which kept him to the house, and Browning sent him the poem that he might amuse himself by drawing illustrations to it. Long afterward the poet's sister found the illustrations which Willie Macready had sent, with a touching letter, to his kind friend.

*Dramatic Lyrics* contained also the famous *Cavalier Tunes*—fine, gallant verse, plain and straightforward as verse can be:

Kentish Sir Byng stood for his King,  
Bidding the crop-headed Parliament swing;  
And, pressing a troop unable to stoop  
And see the rogues flourish and honest folk droop,  
Marched them along, fifty-score strong,  
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song,

and

Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!  
Rescue my Castle before the hot day  
Brightens to blue from its silvery grey,  
Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!

In 1843 came three plays—*The Return of the Druses*, *A Blot on the 'Scutcheon*, and *Colomb's Birthday*. There followed in 1844 *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics*; and the series came to an end in 1846 with *Luria* and *A Soul's Tragedy*.

By this time Browning's poetry had won a small but very fervent circle of admirers; and one of them was a lady, herself a poetess, who read them in the seclusion of the quiet, dimly lighted room in which her life was spent. She had been a healthy, active girl until, at fifteen, she had injured her spine by a fall. She had been sent to Torquay for her health, and there her elder brother, whom she loved devotedly, had been



drowned within sight of the house where she was staying. This had brought on another illness, and when she came back to London it seemed likely that for the rest of her life she would be a confirmed invalid. For years she lived in her father's house, confined to a large, quiet room, and treated by all around her as one doomed to an early death. Her father loved her tenderly, and was willing to give her every comfort and luxury that he thought would be for her good; but he was of a peculiar temperament, and, once having made up his mind that his daughter was to be an invalid for life, he was shocked and almost resentful when anyone suggested that by trying some different treatment she might be restored to health. He wept over her and prayed over her abundantly, and listened with a kind of mournful satisfaction to the doctors who assured him that there was no hope of her recovery. We cannot wonder that in time Miss Barrett herself, her brothers, and her sisters came to take the same view.

In spite of all this she did not give way and become a self-pitying, self-indulgent invalid. She had written verses since the days of her childhood, and now she turned to poetry as the occupation and refreshment of her empty, monotonous days. She published several works, and in 1844 appeared two volumes of her collected poems.

One of the few visitors who were allowed to enter the sick room was Elizabeth Barrett's cousin, Mr John Kenyon, who was a schoolfellow of Robert Browning's father. Mr Kenyon admired her poems intensely, and when the 1844 volumes came out he sent a copy to Robert Browning, his other poet-friend. Browning was already an admirer of Miss Barrett's work, and these new poems made him almost a worshipper. He was deeply gratified when, in one of them, called *Lady Geraldine's Courtship*, he came to the lines:

There, obedient to her praying, did I read aloud the poems,  
 . . . From Browning some "Pomegranate," which, if cut deep  
     down the middle,  
 Shows a heart within blood-tinctured, of a veined humanity.



Mr Kenyon had told him something of Elizabeth Barrett's history, and he was eager to know more. He begged to be taken to see her, but that, his friend told him, was impossible. Why not write to her? So Robert Browning wrote, and Miss Barrett answered, and for months the correspondence, chiefly on literary matters, went on. Then Browning proposed that he should call at her father's house and see her. Miss Barrett was startled and alarmed. She assured him that there was nothing in her to see; when he had read her poetry he knew all of her that was worth knowing. Browning persisted, and in May 1845 he paid his first call. Straightway strong, vigorous, tempestuous Robert Browning fell in love with the frail, low-voiced lady, who lay on her couch and looked at him out of the gloom with her large, soft eyes. Everyone, as he soon saw, treated her as if she were a mixture of a saint and a prisoner doomed to death; but to him she was just the woman he loved and whom he had determined to win. Before he had been to the house many times he asked her to marry him. To all the Barrett household—even, at first, to Elizabeth herself—the idea seemed absurd, almost wicked. The invalid had so long been looked upon as one fated to remain in her darkened room till death came to claim her that when her sisters heard Robert Browning talking calmly of a journey to Italy, and a happy, active life there, they held their breath in astounded consternation. No one dared breathe a word of what was going on to Mr Barrett. The lover knew that to do so would be to cause such a scene as would put an end to all his hopes. He persevered, however, in his proposals. He believed that if he could take Miss Barrett away from her unhealthy surroundings, and set her down somewhere in the sunshine, with ordinary, cheerful, active life going on round about her, she would improve at once. There was a risk that it might make her worse, but that, he believed, might be disregarded.

So on the morning of September 12, 1846, a carriage drove up to the door of Mr Barrett's house in Wimpole Street—the master being absent—and Miss Barrett, escorted by her maid,



Wilson, was brought down from the room of her captivity, and borne away to St Pancras Church. Here she and Browning were married, and a few days later they started for Italy. We do not know how Mr Barrett received the news. "I have no objection to the young man," he said later, "but my daughter should have been thinking of another world."

The results were just what Browning had hoped they would be. His wife's health began to improve, and before long she was leading the life of an ordinary individual. Browning watched over her with the tenderest devotion. They wandered from one Italian city to another, and went on expeditions that it would have frightened Mrs Browning even to think of a year before. In August 1847 she wrote an account of a visit to the monks at Vallombrosa:

Such scenery, such hills, such a sea of hills, looking alive among the clouds—which rolled it was difficult to discern. Such fine woods, supernaturally silent, with the ground black as ink. There were eagles there, too, and there was no road. Robert went on horseback, and Wilson and I were drawn on a sledge (*i.e.*, an old hamper, a basket wine hamper—without a wheel). Think of my travelling in those wild places at four o'clock in the morning! a little frightened, dreadfully tired, but in an ecstasy of admiration.

At the end of another year she was still writing from Florence:

I am quite well again and strong. Robert and I go out often after tea in a wandering walk, to sit in the Loggia and look at the *Perseus*, or, better still, at the divine sunsets on the Arno, turning it to pure gold under the bridges. After more than twenty months of marriage, we are happier than ever.

In March 1849 a little son was born to them. Mrs Browning wrote to her father to tell him the news, but her letter was returned unopened, as her previous letters had been. His obduracy was a great grief to his daughter, but she was so busy and happy she had no time to fret. Both she and her husband were working hard. In 1847 she published privately *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (which were not from the Portuguese at all), in which she told, with wonderful beauty and passion, the story of her courtship and marriage. She meant them, at



first, only for her husband. "One morning, early in 1847," we are told, "Mrs Browning stole quietly after breakfast into the room where her husband worked, thrust some manuscript into his pocket, and then hastily withdrew." Much as he had admired his wife's poetry before, he must have seen at once that this was the finest work she had ever done. When the sonnets appeared in a new volume of poems in 1850 her fame in England outran that of her husband. A new poem, called *Aurora Leigh*, was started soon after the *Sonnets* were finished, and occupied her for several years.

In 1855 the Brownings paid a short visit to London. Browning brought with him the manuscript of a collection of fifty poems which he wished to have published under the title of *Men and Women*, and Mrs Browning brought *Aurora Leigh*. The latter had an immense success, but little notice was taken of *Men and Women*, though it contained some of Browning's finest work. He was neither surprised nor downcast. He had always held his wife to be a better poet than he was himself, and he rejoiced in his own exuberant fashion at her triumph.

All went well until the beginning of the year 1861. Then Mrs Browning's health began to fail, and all through the spring she declined rapidly. In June she died.

Robert Browning's grief was deep and lasting. He came back to England and settled in London near his father and his sister—his mother was dead. In time his naturally buoyant temperament came to his help, and he resumed the active, social life that he loved. In 1864 he published *Dramatis Personæ*, some of which had been written before his wife's death.

The message of these later poems was the same as the message of *Pippa Passes*, though it is not expressed quite so simply. "All service ranks the same with God." "There is no last nor first."

God's in His heaven—  
All's right with the world!

becomes:

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good, shall exist;  
Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty, nor good, nor power



Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist  
 When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.  
 The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,  
 The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,  
 Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard;  
 Enough that he heard it once; we shall hear it by and by.  
 And what is our failure here but a triumph's evidence  
 For the fullness of the days?

The four years that followed the publication of these poems Browning spent in writing *The Ring and the Book*, a long poem, extending to nearly twenty-five thousand lines. It is founded on the account of a Roman murder case which Browning read in a "square old yellow Book" that he picked up on a book-stall in Rome, and it tells the whole story twelve several times, each time from the point of view of one of the persons concerned. It was through this book that fame, so long delayed, came to him at last. During the years he had spent abroad he had been almost forgotten by the public in England. During one entire six months of the period not a single copy of one of his works had been sold. Now, when he was fifty-seven years old, popularity came to him in full and generous measure. A crowd of worshippers gathered round him. Browning societies were formed for the study of his works. The universities offered him their highest honours. His delight in his triumph was as natural and simple and openly shown as the delight of a boy. Only he regretted that his wife, his mother, and his father were not there to share the triumph with him.

He went on writing as eagerly as ever, though there were signs of a falling off in the quality of his verse, and the obscurity which had marked his early works marred some of these later ones. The last volume of his poems, which was called *Asolando: Facts and Fancies*, was published on the day of his death, December 12, 1889.

### (c) *The Two Rossettis and William Morris*

In the year 1825 an Italian gentleman, called Gabriele Rossetti, left his own country and came to settle in England.



He married and took a house in London, and there four children were born to him—two boys and two girls. The eldest boy was named Dante Gabriel, the first of these names being given to him in memory of the great Italian poet. Gabriele Rossetti was a great admirer of Dante; he had studied the poet's works, and had written a book about them which made him famous in his own day. The second boy was named William; the girls were Christina and Maria Francesca. They were very gifted children, and they all had a strong love for what was strange and mystical. They were brought up in strict devotion to the Church, and the girls were trained to go out and earn their living as governesses when they should be old enough.

The life that they led was a quiet and studious one. The boys went to King's College School, and there Dante Gabriel became famous for the verses he wrote—verses which seemed to his masters far above anything that might be expected of a schoolboy. The writing of verses came easily and naturally to Dante Gabriel; he had begun writing them when he was a very small boy indeed, and he went on writing them all his life.

To his sister Christina, who was two years younger than he was, verse-writing came naturally also. She was a shy, delicate little girl, very affectionate, and devoted to her family. She loved animals, and delighted in such small creatures as frogs and mice and caterpillars; and one of her greatest pleasures, all through her life, was a visit to the Zoological Gardens. She and her sister did not go to school, but were taught by their mother, whom they adored. Christina began to write verses when she was nine; she was clever at drawing too, though not so clever as Dante Gabriel. She and Maria Francesca both loved poetry, and they read and studied the works of Dante as enthusiastically as did their father.

When Dante Gabriel Rossetti left school in 1843, at the age of fifteen, he decided that he wished to become a painter. He was sent to an art academy, and for the next five years he went on studying painting and, in his leisure time, writing verses.



After a time he became dissatisfied with the teaching he was getting at the academy. He felt that he did not wish to be taught to paint as the most popular artists of the day were painting. Their work seemed to him pretentious and artificial, full of false sentiment and false pathos, with nothing really true or life-like about it. At length, when he was nineteen, he determined that he would go on in this way no longer; and he wrote to Ford Madox Brown, a painter for whom the critics had no praise, but in whose works Rossetti thought he saw the life and the truth that he wanted. The letter was a strange one, and full of such extravagant praise that Ford Madox Brown thought it was meant as a joke. He was a hot-tempered man, so he took a thick stick in his hand, went to the address given in the letter, and angrily demanded to see Mr Dante Gabriel Rossetti. But when the boy appeared, full of admiration, and eager to explain his difficulties and ask for help, the elder painter understood that the letter had been quite sincere. From that day onward the two were friends. Madox Brown taught Rossetti the rules and principles of his art, and Rossetti's new ideas and his enthusiasm for them helped and inspired his master.

Through Madox Brown Rossetti came to know some of the younger painters of the day, among them Holman Hunt and Millais. They talked eagerly of their ideals, and they read, with great admiration, the works of John Ruskin. They read, too, much poetry, and they loved especially the works of Keats. Gradually they put their ideas about painting into definite shape. They agreed that the art of the day was conventional and poor, and that, to bring life and truth into it, the painters must go back to nature and study, carefully and lovingly, each object or scene that they wished to paint. They must reproduce the detail, not being content, for example, to paint the general form of a tree, but showing the colour and shape of individual branches and leaves. They must use a great variety of bright colours, not just the conventional tints that were in fashion; and they must put into their picture something of



their own individuality instead of copying the style of somebody else. It seemed to Rossetti and his friends that the early Italian painters who lived before Raphael came nearer to doing all these things than the painters of any other time, and so they called themselves the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. They were all young and enthusiastic, and they held firmly that an artist's life must be pure and his thoughts lofty or he could not do his best work.

Rossetti and some other members of the Brotherhood wrote poems as well as painted pictures, and the poems, like the pictures, were full of colour and life and a strange mystical beauty. One of Rossetti's poems, which is perhaps the most famous of any that he wrote, was called *The Blessed Damozel*. It begins:

The blessed damozel leaned out  
From the gold bar of Heaven;  
Her eyes were deeper than the depth  
Of waters stilled at even;  
She had three lilies in her hand,  
And the stars in her hair were seven.

Her robe, ungirt from clasp to hem,  
No wrought flowers did adorn,  
But a white rose of Mary's gift,  
For service sweetly worn;  
Her hair that lay along her back  
Was yellow like ripe corn.

Very soon their work began to be talked about, but not with favour. It was so unlike what people were used to that to many it seemed strange and silly and even unpleasant. Most of the critics were unfriendly, either pointing out faults in the work with great severity or, worse still, making fun of it. In 1850 came an article in *The Times* that made a scathing attack upon them, and especially upon Millais, who was much distressed about it. All the friends of the Pre-Raphaelites were very angry, and one of them went to Ruskin and begged him to take up their cause and show how unfair some of the criticism was. Ruskin was already very much interested in the Pre-Raphaelites, although he did not agree with all their ideas.



He thought that their pictures were far truer and more beautiful than the pictures of many other painters who were very popular, and he wrote a letter to *The Times* defending the Pre-Raphaelites against their critics, and pointing out the merits of their works. Everybody thought a great deal of Ruskin's opinion about art, and, after this, people were inclined to look upon the Brotherhood with a little more favour. From this time onward Ruskin was their firm friend, although he did not get to know Dante Gabriel Rossetti personally until 1854.

About 1856 two young graduates from Oxford joined the Pre-Raphaelites. These were Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris. Morris was the son of a wealthy bill-broker, and had been brought up in a fine old house near Epping Forest. He was one of a large family, and he and his brothers and sisters led a healthy, happy outdoor life, having for their playground the beautiful gardens and park that belonged to their home. William spent three years at Marlborough College, and when he was eighteen he went to Oxford. Here he met Edward Burne-Jones, and the two quickly became friends. They had many things in common. Both of them loved beautiful things, in art and in nature, and both of them were deeply interested in the great questions of the day. They read Ruskin together, and became his most devoted followers. Like him, they believed that art should be a means of leading men to higher and nobler things, and of making their lives better and purer. Both of them, but especially Morris, thought that their own times were ugly and dismal, and looked back with longing to the days when life was simpler and more beautiful; when there were no great cities, with their crowds and their din; when machinery had not been introduced, and there were no factories where men worked as mechanically as the machines they tended, instead of taking a pride and pleasure in turning out good work. Morris loved to read about those earlier times, and to picture them to himself, and he loved to describe the pictures he had made to others.



Both Morris and Burne-Jones had intended to become clergymen when they left the university; but after a time they grew so interested and absorbed in art that it seemed to them the greatest thing in the world. They have told how, returning one summer from a holiday abroad, they walked up and down the quay at Havre until far into the night, talking and arguing, and how at last they came to a decision. Burne-Jones was to be an artist and Morris an architect.

Morris was not obliged to earn his living, for his father had left him a considerable fortune, of which he came into possession in 1855, when he was twenty-one years old. He did not wish to be idle, and for a time he worked hard in an architect's office. He delighted in the work of the Pre-Raphaelites, and under the influence of Rossetti he resolved to give up architecture and become a painter.

He had begun writing verses while he was at college, and had found that he had an extraordinary gift of writing easily and fluently, almost without stopping to think what was to come next. His poems were almost all about the simpler and, as he thought, more beautiful life of bygone days, and he loved to describe some ideal country where men dwelt together in love and friendship, and where there was beauty and peace and happiness for everyone. His first volume of poems was published in 1858, and was dedicated to Dante Gabriel Rossetti. One of the poems in this book was called *Two Red Roses across the Moon*. It is rather a long poem, so I will quote only a few verses :

There was a lady lived in a hall,  
Large in the eyes, and slim and tall;  
And ever she sung from noon to noon,  
*Two red roses across the moon.*

There was a knight came riding by  
In early spring, when the roads were dry;  
And he heard that lady sing at the noon,  
*Two red roses across the moon.*

Yet none the more he stopp'd at all,  
But he rode a-gallop past the hall;



And left that lady singing at noon,  
*Two red roses across the moon.*

Because, forsooth, the battle was set,  
And the scarlet and blue had got to be met,  
He rode on the spur till the next warm noon;—  
*Two red roses across the moon.*

But the battle was scatter'd from hill to hill,  
From the windmill to the watermill;  
And he said to himself, as it near'd the noon,  
*Two red roses across the moon.*

Rossetti, meantime, had gone on painting and writing, and, thanks largely to Ruskin and Morris, who had both bought many of his pictures, he had managed to make a living. He had fallen in love with a beautiful girl, Lizzie Siddal, who was employed in a London bonnet shop. Miss Siddal was an artist by nature, although she had never received any teaching, and she was so lovely that all the Pre-Raphaelites wished to paint her. Rossetti painted her again and again. He wished to marry her, but the money that he earned was not enough, he feared, to provide her with a comfortable home. Miss Siddal was very delicate, and not fitted for hard work, or able to bear privation; and the marriage did not take place until 1860.

Rossetti's family could give him no help. His father had died in 1854, leaving his wife and children very ill provided for. Mrs Rossetti and Christina had been obliged to support themselves by giving lessons in Italian, and by opening a small school. Maria Francesca had by this time entered a convent. Christina had grown up into a slight, delicate girl, not beautiful, but with lovely eyes and a sweet, pensive expression. She and her mother were quite content to lead their own quiet lives together, without outside pleasures. Christina spent her leisure time in reading, and in writing verses. Many of her poems show the religious devotion which was the strongest feeling of her nature; many are about her family, and friends whom she dearly loved; some are full of strange and beautiful fancies. Of these fanciful poems, *Goblin Market* is the best. It is a charming story, telling how wicked goblins tempt two



sisters, Laura and Lizzie, to buy their delicious fruits. Whoever tastes these fruits at once has a wild craving for more; but the malicious sprites will not, for any pleading, give a further supply, because they know that, at a second taste, the craving will disappear. Laura tastes the fruit, and longs so intensely for more of it that she pines away and is near to death. Lizzie, to save her sister, goes to the goblins, who try hard to make her eat some of their fruit. She refuses in such a way that they become more and more eager to make her taste, and try to force the fruit upon her. In doing so, they smear her face with the juice. Then Lizzie joyfully runs home and induces Laura to kiss her, and to suck the juices off her face; and at once the sick girl recovers.

The opening passage of the poem makes us feel how the maidens who heard the goblins cry their fruits must have longed to buy them:

Morning and evening  
 Maids heard the goblins cry:  
 "Come buy our orchard fruits,  
 Come buy, come buy:  
 Apples and quinces,  
 Lemons and oranges,  
 Plump unpecked cherries,  
 Melons and raspberries,  
 Bloom-down-cheeked peaches,  
 Swart-headed mulberries,  
 Wild free-born cranberries,  
 Crab-apples, dewberries,  
 Pine-apples, blackberries,  
 Apricots, strawberries;—  
 All ripe together  
 In summer weather,—  
 Morns that pass by,  
 Fair eves that fly;  
 Come buy, come buy:  
 Our grapes fresh from the vine,  
 Pomegranates full and fine,  
 Dates and sharp bullaces,  
 Rare pears and greengages,  
 Damsons and bilberries,  
 Taste them and try;  
 Currants and gooseberries,  
 Bright-fire-like barberries,



## THE GREAT VICTORIANS

---

Figs to fill your mouth,  
Citrons from the South,  
Sweet to tongue and sound to eye:  
Come buy, come buy."

*Goblin Market* was published, in a volume with some other poems, in 1862, and in the same year Dante Gabriel's wife died. His grief at her loss was terrible. It seemed to him that his own life too was over, and that he would never care to write again. Time brought him some comfort, but he never really forgot his sorrow. He was often irritable and morose, and the happy friendships of his earlier days were marred by his uncertain temper.

He was making a good income now by his pictures and his poems, and he took a large house in Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, where, for a time, Swinburne and Meredith lived with him. He filled his rooms with all sorts of curious and beautiful objects. He kept a large number of curious animals; at one time and another he is said to have had a wombat, a woodchuck, an armadillo, a racoon, a kangaroo, a deer, a chameleon, a salamander, and a zebu. The wombat used to sleep on an *épergne* in the middle of the dining-room table.

It was not a very comfortable house to live in, for there was no one to look after the housekeeping, and the servants were careless and dishonest. Swinburne and Meredith soon left, and in 1871 Rossetti joined Morris as part-tenant of a beautiful old house called Kelmscott Manor House, in Oxfordshire, close to the Thames.

Morris had for some years been giving most of his time to a new scheme, which he had taken up with great enthusiasm. His love of beauty had made him feel more and more acutely how very ugly the houses and the furniture and the clothes that he saw all around him were. He set to work to try to change all this, and to show people how they could make their common belongings beautiful. He designed carpets and wall-papers, chintzes, glass and metal vessels, and all sorts of everyday things such as are used in every house, and he founded



a factory where his designs could be carried out. It is largely owing to William Morris that the ugly, heavy furniture disappeared from many middle-class English homes, and articles graceful in form and beautiful in colour took its place.

With all this work upon his hands Morris still found time for writing poetry, and in 1870 one of his finest poems—*The Life and Death of Jason*—appeared. Here is the passage from it which tells how Jason, with the help given him by Medea, tamed the brazen bulls:

Ugly and rugged was that spot of ground,  
And with an iron wall was closed around,  
And at the farther end a monstrous cage  
Of iron bars, shut in the stupid rage  
Of those two beasts, and therefrom ever came  
The flashing and the scent of sulphurous flame,  
As with their brazen, clangorous bellowing  
They hailed the coming of the Colchian king.  
Nor was there one of the seafaring men  
But trembled, gazing on the deadly pen,  
But Jason only, who before the rest  
Shone like a star, having upon his breast  
A golden corslet from the treasury  
Of wise King Phineus. . . .  
And from that treasury his golden shoe  
Came, and his thighs the king's gift covered too;  
But on his head his father's helm was set  
Wreathed round with bay leaves, and his sword lay yet  
Within the scabbard, while his ungloved hand  
Bore nought within it but an olive wand. . . .  
Now Jason, when he heard the challenge blow,  
Across the evil fallow 'gan to go  
With face beyond its wont in nowise pale,  
Nor footstep faltering, if that might avail  
The doomed man aught; so to the cage he came,  
Whose bars now glowed red hot with spouted flame,  
In many a place; nor doubted any one  
Who there beheld him that his days were done,  
Except his love alone, and even she,  
Sickening with doubt and terror, scarce could see  
The hero draw the brazen bolt aside  
And throw the glowing wicket open wide.  
But he alone, apart from his desire,  
Stood unarmed, facing those two founts of fire,  
Yet feared not aught, for hope and fear were dead  
Within his heart, and utter hardihead



Had Juno set there; but the awful beasts  
Beholding now the best of all their feasts  
Roared in their joy and fury, till from sight  
They and the prince were hidden by the white  
Thick rolling clouds of sulphurous, pungent smoke,  
Through which upon the blinded man they broke.  
But when within a yard of him they came  
Baffled they stopped, still bellowing, and the flame  
Still spouting out from nostril and from mouth,  
As from some island mountain in the south  
The trembling mariners behold it cast;  
But still to right and left of him it passed,  
Breaking upon him as cool water might  
Nor harming more, except that from his sight  
All corners of the cage were hidden now,  
Nor knew he where to seek the brazen plough;  
As to and fro about the quivering cage  
The monsters rushed in blind and helpless rage.  
But as he doubted, to his eyes alone  
Within the place a golden light outshone,  
Scattering the clouds of smoke, and he beheld  
Once more the Goddess who his head upheld  
In rough Anauras on that other tide;  
She, smiling on him, beckoned, and 'gan glide  
With rosy feet across the fearful floor,  
Breathing cool odours round her, till a door  
She opened to him in the iron wall,  
Through which he passed, and found a grisly stall  
Of iron still, and at one end of it,  
By glimmering lamps with greenish flame half lit,  
Beheld the yoke and shining plough he sought,  
Which, seizing straight, by mighty strength he brought  
Unto the door. . . .

Upon the foreheads of the twain  
Had Jason cast the yoke with little pain,  
And drove them now with shouts out through the door  
Which in such guise ne'er had they passed before,  
For never were they made the earth to till,  
But rather feeding fat, to work the will  
Of some all-knowing man; but now they went  
Like any peasant's beasts, tamed by the scent  
Of those new herbs Medea's hand had plucked,  
Whose roots from evil earth strange power had sucked.  
Now in the open field did Jason stand,  
And to the plough-stilts set his unused hand,  
And down betwixt them lustily he bent;  
Then the bulls drew, and the bright ploughshare sent  
The loathly fallow up on the right side,  
Whilst o'er their bellowing shrilly Jason cried:  
"Draw nigh, O King, and thy new ploughman see."



Morris had now taken up the Socialist cause and went about speaking and lecturing for it. He wrote many Socialistic pamphlets also, and this work, added to his other activities, made him a very busy man indeed. He loved his beautiful house by the river, and he filled it with all sorts of beautiful things, many of them of his own design. Rossetti did not for long share this home with him. The saddened man could not find peace even in that quiet country retreat. His restless spirit drove him from place to place. His health and his eyes were both failing, and he died at Birchington, near Margate, in April 1882.

Yet some of his best work was done during these last troubled years of his life. In 1881 he wrote *The King's Tragedy*, which tells the story of the murder of James I, the Poet King of Scotland. The story is put into the mouth of Catherine Douglas:

I, Catherine, am a Douglas born,  
A name to all Scots dear;  
And Kate Barlass they've called me now,  
Through many a waning year.

So she begins; and she goes on to tell in vivid language of the ride of the royal party to Perth, and of how, by the way, the King met a wise woman who warned him that he was about to put himself into terrible danger. But the King disregarded her warning, and disregarded it, too, when she came to him again later, on the night that the dreadful deed was done. On that night there was mirth and singing and dancing in the hall, and the King, at his followers' entreaties, sang the song he had made long before, when he was a prisoner in England:

And I said, "My Liege, for the Queen's dear love,  
Now sing the song that of old  
You made, when a captive Prince you lay,  
And the nightingale sang sweet on the spray  
In Windsor's castle hold."

Then she tells of the sudden alarm, of the King's flight, and of her own attempt to bar the door.

And now the rush was heard on the stair,  
And, "God! what help?" was our cry,



## THE GREAT VICTORIANS

---

And was I frenzied or was I bold?  
I looked at each empty stanchion hold,  
And no bar but my arm had I.

Like iron felt my arm as through  
The staple I made it pass;—  
Alack! it was flesh and bone,—no more!  
'Twas Catherine Douglas sprang to the door,  
But I fell back Kate Barlass.

With that they all thronged into the hall,  
Half dim to my failing ken,  
And the space that was but a void before  
Was a crowd of wrathful men.

So she goes on to the tragic ending:

O God! what more did I hear or see?  
Or how should I tell the rest?  
But there at length our King lay slain  
With sixteen wounds in his breast.

Christina Rossetti survived her brother for eleven years, dying, in 1893, of a lingering and painful illness. William Morris worked on until 1896, and died worn out by unceasing toil. His last poem, *The Sundering Flood*, was finished less than a month before his death.



---

## *Chapter XXXV*

### FROM VICTORIA TO THE GREAT WAR

#### I. GEORGE MEREDITH

**I**N the year 1831 there stood in the High Street of Portsmouth a tailor's shop. It was not quite an ordinary tailor's shop, for its chief business was fitting out naval officers with their uniforms, and the most famous sailors of the day came in and out, to be measured and fitted, and to talk with Mr Augustus Meredith, who was the grandson of the founder of the business. Nelson had very likely been there; his friend Hardy certainly had, and had been on familiar terms with the family.

Mr Meredith had a son, a handsome little boy, three years old, who, although he played with the sons of the neighbouring tradespeople, always felt that he was a little different from them; and they always treated him as if he were a little superior to themselves. When he was five years old his mother died, and after that his two aunts had the most to do with his bringing-up. They were both of them clever and beautiful women, well educated and well bred, and they taught little George to look forward to a future in which he would be something better than a tailor in a seaport town, as his fathers had been before him. The boy was ready enough to listen to them, for he was ambitious, and brimming over with life and energy; and the tailor's shop seemed to him but a dull place in which to spend one's life.

When he was about nine years old he was sent to St Paul's School at Southsea, which was a school very much better than those to which most of the Portsmouth tradespeople sent their sons. He stayed here for four years, and then his father married again and moved his tailor's shop to St James's Street,



London. George was sent to a boarding-school near Petersfield, and here, having escaped entirely from the tailor's shop, he led a free and happy life with his fellows. He learned eagerly, especially anything that had to do with history or romance. He swam and boxed, and took long walks in the country. He was often loud and boisterous in his behaviour and sometimes unruly, and, like most schoolboys, he had his share of floggings. But he never resented these, and always upheld that schoolboy floggings have helped to build up the character of great Englishmen.

He was an adventurous boy, and was not for long satisfied with the life of a small private school. He heard, through one of the other boys, of a school that had been opened in Germany. It was rather a remarkable school, kept by the Moravian brothers, and situated in one of the most beautiful parts of the Rhineland. To this school George determined to go, and after some trouble he managed to get his way. In 1842, when he was fourteen years old, he travelled by himself to Neuwied, and under the gentle rule of the Moravian brothers, who were in some ways like our English Quakers, he spent two happy years. There were no floggings here, but there was a strict, though kindly, supervision kept over the boys at almost every moment of the day and night. They spent a good deal of time out of doors, and George Meredith remembered and loved all his life the beautiful Rhineland country, its mountains and rivers and old castles, that were lovely even in the great storms that sometimes broke over them. At Whitsuntide the Moravian brothers took their pupils for a few days' walking tour, when, with knapsacks on their backs, they tramped over hills and along field-paths, took their meals at some wayside farm, and at night slept under a haystack or in a barn. At Christmas there was the Christmas tree, the Christ Child in the manger, and the Christmas hymns sounding in the frosty night. In everything the good brothers strove to be true to their aim "to bring boys up for the Lord Jesus."

When George Meredith came back to England he spent



nearly two years with his father in London. He was not very happy. He hated the tailor's shop, and he had never got on very well with his father, who had little sympathy with his clever son's ambitions. The greatest joy that the boy had was in reading. He read Carlyle and delighted in him; he read quantities of poetry, both of the great poets and of those less well known; and he began to try to write verses himself.

In 1846 it was decided that he should become a solicitor, and he was articled to a Mr Charnock. Mr Charnock had a taste for literature, loved long walks, and was acquainted with Dickens and various other writers, so George Meredith found his new position a pleasant one. He was introduced to the son of Thomas Love Peacock, the novelist; and he and Peacock and a few others joined together to produce each month (in manuscript) a periodical which they called *The Monthly Observer*. They criticized each other's writings, and Meredith made uproarious fun of his friends' productions. His own contributions were mostly poems, some of them translations from the German.

One of the contributors to *The Monthly Observer* was Mary Nicolls, the widowed daughter of Thomas Love Peacock. She was brilliantly clever, and interested in all the things that interested young George Meredith, and the two fell in love almost at first sight. They were married in 1849, and though they had very little money they were very happy. They moved about from one lodging to another, and spent long periods with Mary's father. Meredith had always admired his novels, and when he came to know the man he admired him even more, and under Peacock's influence he gave up the law and determined to try to earn a living by writing.

It was only a scanty living that he earned for a good many years. Most of it came from the various periodicals to which he contributed articles and occasional poems. In 1850 he published a collection of these poems, but only a few discerning people, like Charles Kingsley, took much notice of them. Then he turned to prose and wrote *The Shaving of Shagpat*,



which he called *An Arabian Entertainment*. It is a fantastic Eastern story, telling of the adventures that befell Shibli Bagarag, nephew to the renowned Baba Mustapha, chief barber to the Court of Persia, in his attempts to shave Shagpat, the son of Shimpoor, noted for his enormous growth of hair and beard.

In 1859 Meredith published his first novel, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*. It is the story of a boy whose father determined to bring him up according to a strict system. The system did not allow him to be sent to school, but he was allowed to have one boy, of a class lower than his own, the son of his father's solicitor, living in the house with him. The two were very good friends, but on one memorable day they quarrelled. Richard called Ripton Thomson (the solicitor's son) a fool, and when Ripton grew angry declared that he would say it again, and twenty times over if he liked.

"Do it and see!" returns Ripton, rocking on his pins and breathing quick.

With a gravity of which only boys and other barbarians are capable, Richard went through the entire number, stressing the epithet to increase the defiance and avoid monotony, as he progressed, while Ripton bobbed his head every time, in assent, as it were, to his comrade's accuracy, and as a record for his profound humiliation. Old Mark'em gazed at the extraordinary performance with interrogating wags of the tail.

Twenty times, duly and deliberately, Richard repeated the obnoxious word.

At the twentieth solemn iteration of Ripton's capital shortcoming, old Mark'em started up to action. Ripton had delivered a smart back hander on Richard's mouth, and squared precipitately; perhaps sorry when the deed was done, for he was a kind-hearted lad, and as Richard simply bowed in acknowledgment of the blow, he thought he had gone too far. He did not know the young gentleman he was dealing with. Richard was extremely cool.

"Shall we fight here?" he said.

"Anywhere you like," replied Ripton.

"A little more into the wood, I think. We may be interrupted." And Richard led the way with a courteous reserve that somewhat chilled Ripton's ardour for the contest. On the skirts of the wood Richard threw off his jacket and waistcoat, and, quite collected, waited for Ripton to do the same.



So the boys fought, and Meredith describes the fight in detail. From the beginning Richard had the best of it, for he had been taught to box and Ripton had not. The solicitor's son was plucky and obstinate, but he had no chance. The fight was at its fiercest when the boys saw their tutor and another gentleman in the distance, advancing toward them. They caught up their jackets and fled, and did not stop until they were at a safe distance. Then Richard asked Ripton if he had had enough.

"Never!" shouts the noble enemy.

"Well, look here," said Richard, appealing to common sense, "I'm tired of knocking you down. I'll say you're not a fool, if you'll give me your hand."

Ripton demurred an instant to consult with Honour, who bade him catch at his chance.

He held out his hand. "There!" and the boys grasped hands and were fast friends. Ripton had gained his point, and Richard decidedly had the best of it. So they were on equal ground. Both could claim a victory, which was all the better for their friendship.

I am not going to tell you about any of Meredith's other works; there is a long list of them, ending with *The Amazing Marriage*, published in 1895, when he was sixty-seven years old. He published several volumes of poems too, and some people think that these are even better than his prose works. Here is a verse from one of them:

Happy happy time, when the white star hovers  
 Low over dim fields fresh with bloomy dew,  
 Near the face of dawn, that draws athwart the darkness,  
 Threading it with colour, like the yewberries the yew.  
 Thicker crowd the shades as the grave East deepens  
 Glowing, and with crimson a long cloud swells.  
 Maiden still the morn is; and strange she is, and secret;  
 Strange her eyes; her cheeks are cold as cold sea-shells.

Meredith's long life, apart from his writings, was a very uneventful one. In 1861 his first wife died, leaving him with a little son, Arthur, whom he adored. In 1864 he married again, and in 1865 he went to live at Flint Cottage, Box Hill, which was his home for the rest of his life. Another son and a daughter



were born to him, and he had many friends; and his life was very full and busy and active, until in 1892 the illness came upon him which made him an invalid until his death in 1909.

## II. THOMAS HARDY

If someone were to ask you which is the part of England known as Wessex you would most likely be a little puzzled how to answer. Your mind would go back to those early times of which you learned in your history lessons, when a band of Saxons, under Cerdic, came to Britain and set up their great kingdom in the west, and called it Wessex. But, after that time, you would be able to recall nothing more about Wessex: it seemed to disappear from the map. It is not in the list of English counties, as Essex and Sussex are; the space it once occupied is filled up with Somerset and Devon and other counties; no one talks of Wessex now; it has passed, as Mercia and the rest of the Saxon kingdoms have passed.

It had disappeared until, nearly fifty years ago, Thomas Hardy gave it a new existence in his novels and his poems. He mapped out a certain part of the English West Country—the part in which he had been born and brought up—and laid the scenes of all, or nearly all, his stories within it; and the district he so mapped out he called Wessex. It lies south of a line drawn from Oxford to Bristol, and extends east and west from Surrey and Sussex to Cornwall. He pictured it so vividly, and peopled it with men and women and children who were so real and so interesting and so true to their surroundings, that everybody was willing to recognize the kingdom he had created and over which he ruled; and now we talk of ‘Hardy’s Wessex’ as if it were as definite a geographical district as Wales or Yorkshire.

Hardy was not the first writer to take possession, in this way, of a particular piece of England, and make it the home of his brain-children, but he did it more completely and with more vitalizing power than those who went before him had done.



Nor have those who have followed him succeeded as he succeeded. This does not mean that his books are in any way narrow in their view, or that his characters are monotonously alike. As Hardy says, "There is quite enough human nature in Wessex for one man's literary purpose," and it is human nature out of which great writers make their stories.

Hardy's own particular part of Wessex was the district round about Dorchester. Three miles away from Dorchester, on the borders of Bockhampton Heath, there stood in 1840 a few scattered houses, which made up what was known as Higher Bockhampton. They were quaint little dwellings, not cottages and not villas, but something between the two. They had brass knockers and green shutters, pleasant gardens, full of old-fashioned, sweet-smelling flowers, small, blossoming orchards, green paddocks, and tall beech-trees to protect them from the winds that swept the heath. The people who lived in them were neither poor nor rich; they were mostly elderly, retired couples, living frugally on a small but sufficient income, or families being brought up in comfort on the earnings of a hard-working father.

In the house farthest to the east lived a builder and contractor whose name was Thomas Hardy. His father had lived there before him, but his ancestors had lived in Jersey, and had come over, so it was said, in the fifteenth century and settled in Dorset. Thomas Hardy was rather proud of his ancestors, for many of them had been famous men; and he was especially proud of that Thomas Hardy in whose arms Nelson had died after the battle of Trafalgar. He himself was a handsome man, with fine, courteous manners that won him favour with all the Dorsetshire great ladies whom he met in the way of business; for he was employed by all the important families round about. The young wife whom he brought to his remote, pleasant home in 1838 was small, pretty, quick-witted, and an excellent housekeeper, so that the future novelist could scarcely have chosen a better place in which



to spend his childhood than this house on the edge of the heath.

He was born on June 2, 1840, and was christened Thomas, as his forbears had been, but for the first five or six years of his life no one believed that he would live to be a man and add another name to the long list of Thomas Hardys who had done good and useful work in the world. He was very fragile, and had an eager, sensitive nature that made him feel with almost painful keenness the pleasures as well as the sorrows of his childish life. He loved music, yet there were certain tunes that always made him weep, and this before he was four years old. He had such an intense enjoyment of colour that he used to watch for the moment when the evening sun shone in on the walls of the staircase of his home, which were coloured Venetian red, and when that moment came he would sit gazing at the deep, wonderful glow that the light produced, reciting in an ecstasy Dr Watts's hymn *And now Another Day is gone* as a sort of relief to his feelings.

He could read, we are told, almost before he could walk, and by the time he was eight he was reading such books as Dryden's translation of Virgil and Johnson's *Rasselas*. By this time, too, he was attending the village school, for he had grown stronger, and his mother was anxious that her eldest son, quick and clever as he was, should have the best education that could be given him. This village school was better than most village schools, but Mrs Hardy was not long contented with it. Thomas stayed there only a year, and then, as his health was still improving, he was considered strong enough to walk the three miles into Dorchester and the three miles back and to attend a day-school in the town. Here he had a really excellent schoolmaster, and learnt Latin, which was an 'extra,' as well as the ordinary school subjects; and a little later he had special French lessons from the French governess at his sister's school, and he tried to teach himself German.

He was not a very industrious schoolboy, and there were



many things he liked better than his lessons. He loved solitary walks in the beautiful country round his home, and he loved music. His father and his grandfather and his uncles had all been famous in the district as performers on the violin. For many years they had been the church players in the parish of Stinsford, where they lived; Sunday after Sunday they took their places in the gallery and played hymns and psalms and anthems. Thomas Hardy, the grandfather, had been especially noted, and had conducted the church choir, and occupied the middle seat in the gallery, with his bass-viol, for thirty-five years. On Christmas Eve the choir used to assemble at his house and then go out to sing at every house in the northern part of the parish; then come back, eat a great supper, over which they would sit until twelve o'clock, and go out once more to the other part of the parish. It was usually six in the morning before they got home, and they found the Christmas Day services something of a trial. Thomas Hardy has given an account of one of these carol-singings in his second novel, *Under the Greenwood Tree*. He never saw the revels, for they were discontinued when he was about a year old; but he must have heard a great deal of talk about them, and many tales of strange and comical incidents that had happened on those midnight rounds.

Old William Dewy, with the violoncello, played the bass; his grandson Dick the treble violin; and Reuben and Michael Mail the tenor and second violin respectively. The singers consisted of four men and seven boys, upon whom devolved the task of carrying and attending to the lanterns, and holding the books open for the players. Directly music was the theme, old William ever and instinctively came to the front.

"Now mind, neighbours," he said, as they all went out one by one at the door, he himself holding it ajar and regarding them with a critical face as they passed, like a shepherd counting out his sheep. "You two counter-boys, keep your ears open to Michael's fingering, and don't ye go straying into the treble part along o' Dick and his set, as ye did last year; and mind this especially when we be in 'Arise, and hail.' Billy Chimlen, don't you sing quite so raving mad as you fain would; and, all o' ye, whatever ye do, keep from making a great scuffle on the ground



when we go in at people's gates; but go quietly, so as to strike up all of a sudden, like spirits."

"Farmer Ledlow's first?"

"Farmer Ledlow's first; the rest as usual."

"And, Voss," said the tranter terminatively, "you keep house here till about half-past two; then heat the metheglin and cider in the warmer you'll find turned up upon the copper; and bring it wi' the victuals to church-hatch, as th'st know."

Young Thomas Hardy could play the violin almost as well as his father, and by the time he was fourteen he had managed to join himself to the family band of musicians, and go with the others when they played, as they occasionally did, at dances and merrymakings. Then he began to go by himself, and though his parents were not very pleased that he should do this, they did not forbid it, so long as he promised to take no money for his performances. So he went on, and enjoyed these outings immensely, and had gained a high reputation as a player when the time came for him to leave school and prepare to earn his own living.

His father wished him to be an architect, and the boy was quite willing; and when he was sixteen years old he was apprenticed to a Mr John Hicks, an architect and church-restorer of Dorchester. Mr Hicks was a scholar and a kindly natured man, and he encouraged Hardy and the other pupil who was with him in the office to study Greek and Latin as well as architecture; so that the six years of Thomas's apprenticeship were very full and busy. He got up early and read Greek for an hour or more before breakfast; then walked to Dorchester, and spent the day over architectural plans and drawings; walked home in the evening, and ended the day either in study, or in playing the fiddle with his father and his uncle at a dance or a wedding, perhaps several miles away, often returning only when the dawn was beginning to lighten the country roads and fields.

In 1862 Hardy came up to London to seek his fortune there, and after a short time was lucky enough to find employment in the office of a Mr Blomfield, who did a great deal of work



in designing and restoring churches. He worked hard at his profession, joined a French class at King's College, saw a great deal of London and its sights, and wrote many poems, a few of which he sent to magazines. But he had little success, and he decided to give up verse-writing and try a play; nothing came of this project, however, and it was not until 1867 that he attempted his first story, which he called *The Poor Man and the Lady: a Story with no Plot*. He sent the manuscript to a publisher, and the publisher wrote and asked him if he would call and see the 'reader'—that is, the gentleman who had read the manuscript to see whether the story was suitable for publication by the firm. Hardy went, and saw a handsome man with a dark brown beard and waving hair, who spoke to him in such an impressive manner that the young author was almost awed. He did not know until later that this was George Meredith, the novelist.

Meredith told him that the firm would publish his novel if he wished them to do so, but he strongly advised him to withdraw it. The story was a bitter and satirical attack on the manners and morals of Society, and on all sorts of institutions and beliefs that many people held in reverence. Hardy, during his stay in London, had heard a great deal about the social evils, the injustices and abuses against which, as we have seen, so many of the most generous spirits of the time were waging war. He was by nature disposed to look on the dark side of things, and he could see nothing but falseness and hypocrisy in the world around him. So, like a champion of old, he rushed into the fray, dealing out blows right and left, and sparing none. Meredith showed him that this was useless as well as unwise. If Hardy published this novel he would at once get a name as a revolutionary and perhaps a dangerous writer, and any other he might write would not have a chance of being fairly judged. Hardy saw that the advice of the older writer was wise and kind. He took the manuscript away with him, promising to think the matter over, with the result that *The Poor Man and the Lady* was heard of no more.



He had, however, been encouraged by the praise which had been given to the power and ability shown in his story, and he set to work upon another, which was to avoid the faults of the first. He wrote this in his scanty leisure hours, for he was still working at his profession as an architect; and it was only just finished when, in February 1870, he was sent down to superintend the restoration of the church of St Juliot, near Boscastle, in Cornwall. The wife of the Rector of St Juliot's had a sister living with her, whose name was Miss Emma Lavinia Gifford, and she and the young architect seem to have fallen in love with each other at once, although they were not married until more than five years later.

The novel Hardy had written, which he called *Desperate Remedies*, was published in 1871. It is not a very good story, for in trying to write it according to the advice given him by the publishers Hardy had managed to spoil his own ideas, but it was successful enough to encourage him to go on. His next work was *Under the Greenwood Tree*, the first of his real Wessex stories. It is full of pictures like that of the Christmas Eve carol-singing which has been quoted, all of them studied from life, and all of them delightful. Next came *A Pair of Blue Eyes* in 1873, which is much more powerful and has a tragic ending; and with this begins the series of pitiful and heartrending stories in which Hardy's tendency to look on the dark side of life is shown growing stronger as time goes on. The height of his tragic power is reached in his two greatest novels, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891) and *Jude the Obscure* (1895). They are wonderful books, told with a nobility of language and a largeness of outlook that alone make their tragedy bearable. None of Hardy's books is such as you will want to read until you are a good deal older than you are now; and when you do read them you must give them close and serious study, or you will see little of the beauty that underlies the sadness.

It is not all sadness. There are passages in nearly all of the books which have a fine country humour, and many that have beauty and charm. There is the description of the weekly



pay-day on Bathsheba Everdene's farm in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, published in 1874:

Half-an-hour later Bathsheba, in finished dress, and followed by Liddy, entered the upper end of the old hall to find that her men had all deposited themselves on a long form and a settle at the lower extremity. She sat down at a table and opened the time-book, pen in her hand, with a canvas money-bag beside her. From this she poured a small heap of coin. Liddy chose a position at her elbow and began to sew, sometimes pausing and looking round, or with the air of a privileged person taking up one of the half-sovereigns lying before her, and surveying it merely as a work of art, while strictly preventing her countenance from expressing any wish to possess the money.

"Now, before I begin, men," said Bathsheba, "I have two matters to speak of. The first is that the bailiff is dismissed for thieving, and that I have formed a resolution to have no bailiff at all, but to manage everything with my own head and hands."

The men breathed an audible breath of amazement.

"Well, now then"—she looked into the book—"Joseph Poorgrass, are you there?"

"Yes, sir,—ma'am I mane," said the person addressed. "I be the personal name of Poorgrass."

"And what are you?"

"Nothing in my own eye. In the eye of other people—well, I don't say it; though public thought will out."

"What do you do on the farm?"

"I do do carting things all the year, and in seed-time I shoots the rooks and sparrows, and helps at pig-killing, sir."

"How much to you?"

"Please nine and ninepence and a good halfpenny where 'twas a bad one, sir—ma'am I mane."

"Quite correct. Now here are ten shillings in addition as a small present, as I am a new comer."

Bathsheba blushed slightly at the sense of being generous in public, and Henery Fray, who had drawn up towards her chair, lifted his eyebrows and fingers to express amazement on a small scale.

"How much do I owe you—that man in the corner—what's your name?" continued Bathsheba.

"Matthew Moon, ma'am," said a singular framework of clothes with nothing of any consequence inside them, which advanced with the toes in no definite direction forwards, but turned in or out as they chanced to swing.

"Matthew Mark, did you say?—speak out—I shall not hurt you," inquired the young farmer, kindly.



"Matthew Moon, mem," said Henery Fray, correctingly, from behind her chair, to which point he had edged himself.

"Matthew Moon," murmured Bathsheba, turning her bright eyes to the book. "Ten and twopence halfpenny is the sum put down to you, I see?"

"Yes, mis'ess," said Matthew, as the rustle of wind among dead leaves.

"Here it is, and ten shillings. Now the next—Andrew Randle, you are a new man, I hear. How came you to leave your last farm?"

"P-p-p-p-pl-pl-pl-pl-l-l-l-l-l-ease, ma'am, p-p-p-p-pl-pl-pl-pl-please, ma'am-please'm-please'm—"

"'A's a stammering man, mem," said Henery Fray in an undertone, "and they turned him away because the only time he ever did speak plain he said his soul was his own, and other iniquities, to the squire. 'A can cuss, mem, as well as you or I, but 'a can't speak a common speech to save his life."

"Andrew Randle, here's yours—finish thanking me in a day or two. Temperance Miller—oh, here's another, Soberness—both women, I suppose?"

"Yes'm. Here we be, 'a b'lieve," was echoed in shrill unison.

"What have you been doing?"

"Tending thrashing-machine, and wimbling haybonds, and saying 'Hoosh!' to the cocks and hens when they go upon your seeds, and planting early Flourballs and Thompson's Wonderfals with a dibble."

"Yes—I see. . . . Now the next. Laban Tall, you'll stay on working for me?"

"For you or anybody that pays me well, ma'am," replied the young married man.

"True—the man must live!" said a woman in the back quarter, who had just entered with clicking pattens.

"What woman is that?" Bathsheba asked.

"I be his lawful wife!" continued the voice with greater prominence of manner and tone. . . .

"Oh, you are," said Bathsheba. "Well, Laban, will you stay on?"

"Yes, he'll stay, ma'am!" said again the shrill tongue of Laban's lawful wife.

"Well, he can speak for himself, I suppose."

"O, Lord, not he, ma'am! A simple tool. Well enough, but a poor gawkhammer mortal," the wife replied.

"Heh-heh-heh!" laughed the married man with a hideous effort of appreciation, for he was as irrepressibly good-humoured under ghastly snubs as a parliamentary candidate on the hustings.

The names remaining were called in the same manner.



After *Jude the Obscure* Hardy wrote no more novels. All his life he had, from time to time, written poems, and in 1898 he published a volume of these, with the title *Wessex Poems*. Between 1903 and 1908 he published his great drama *The Dynasts*, which deals with the Napoleonic wars. After this came two more volumes of poems. A very beautiful example of his lyrical poetry is the Christmas carol called *The Oxen*, in which he remembers the old country superstition that at twelve o'clock on Christmas Eve all the oxen in the world kneel down in memory of certain oxen in Bethlehem who knelt by the manger on the first Christmas Eve:

Christmas Eve, and twelve of the clock.

“Now they are all on their knees,”

An elder said as we sat in a flock

By the embers in hearthside ease.

We pictured the meek mild creatures where

They dwelt in their strawy pen,

Nor did it occur to one of us there

To doubt they were kneeling then.

So fair a fancy few would weave

In these years! Yet, I feel,

If some one said on Christmas Eve,

“Come; see the oxen kneel.

“In the lonely barton by yonder coomb

Our childhood used to know,”

I should go with him in the gloom,

Hoping it might be so.

### III. JOSEPH CONRAD

We English people, as a nation, have always had a deep and intimate love of the sea, such as can only be felt by an island race whose preserver and food-bringer and faithful friend it has always been. Since the days of the Saxons our poets have made songs in its praise, and our story-tellers have thrilled us with tales of its dangers and its glories. Nearly every day brings us from some far corner of the ocean or from the seas that wash our own coasts such tales of heroism and endurance as fiction would find it hard to match. Nevertheless, we are



always ready to listen to a really good yarn about the sea, and when, about thirty-five years ago, there came a writer who could tell us superlatively good ones he quickly gathered a large and eager audience. This man belonged to no island country, but to a land whose borders no sea washed. Until he was nineteen years old he had never heard our English tongue spoken, and had learnt from books only a few words of it. Yet he wrote in beautiful, forceful, and easy English, and his books have taken a higher place in literature than the books of any other man writing in a language that was not his own have ever done.

To understand how Feodor Josef Conrad Korzeniowski (Joseph Conrad, as we know him) managed to do all this, we must go back to his early history. He was a Pole, born during the time that Russia ruled his country with a tyrannous and cruel hand. His father, Apollo Korzeniowski, was one of those Polish patriots who belonged to the secret National Committee, which was working to keep up the spirit of resistance to Russia, and to bring about a movement by which the Poles might some day recover their independence. In 1862, when Joseph Conrad was five years old, this Committee was planning a general rising, and many secret meetings were held at Apollo Korzeniowski's house in Warsaw. The Russians had their spies everywhere, and from some of these they heard of the meetings. In October Korzeniowski was arrested and sentenced to be deported to a distant part of Russia. His young wife, who was as ardent a patriot as he was himself, asked leave to go with him, and this was granted, on condition that she was subject to the same discipline as her husband. So the three—father, mother, and little son—set out on the long, terrible journey to Vologda, in Northern Russia. On the way little Joseph fell dangerously ill, and his mother begged the Russian officer in charge to allow them to stay and rest until the child was better. He refused harshly. "Let him die. What is one baby more or less among thousands?" Fortunately for the little boy, there were others less hard-hearted. A



passing traveller offered to fetch a doctor, and the doctor induced the officer to allow a halt, and so the child's life was saved.

They reached Vologda in February 1863, and began a life that was full of hardship. They had no money, and were only kept alive by small sums that Madame Korzeniowski's brother managed to send them; but they had brave hearts, and a passionate faith in their cause, and so they were able to bear their sufferings with dignity, and to help their fellow-exiles to keep up courage and hope. Soon came another trouble. Mme Korzeniowski's health began to fail; the hardships and sorrows of her life had brought on consumption in one of its worst forms. As a special favour, she and her little son were allowed to spend three months with her brother at Nowogastow. When the time came for her return she was so ill that everyone who saw her believed she could not live through the long journey back to Vologda; yet the stern Russian Government would not allow even an hour's delay. Joseph remembered, to the end of his life, sitting in the shabby travelling carriage and watching the mournful household gathered before the house door while Uncle Thaddeus, supporting his frail, suffering sister, passed down the broad flight of steps to where the Russian guard stood waiting.

The father had by this time obtained permission, on consideration of his wife's health, to move farther south, to the slightly warmer climate of Tchernikow. But the change was useless. Mme Korzeniowski grew rapidly worse, and at the beginning of 1865 she died. Then Joseph became the only comfort of his weary, suffering father. Uncle Casimir—another of his mother's brothers—would gladly have taken the boy and brought him up as his own, but Joseph decided to stay with his father, though he paid occasional visits to both his uncles. The father, drawing quickly nearer to the death that was the only possible release from his troubles, spent his last strength in teaching his son the things he himself had learnt in his ardent youth; the son, active, eager, and loving,



was saddened by the sight of his father's quiet hopelessness, and by the dreary monotony of his life. His only pleasure was in reading. He read all his father's books, and all the books that friends contrived to send him, over and over again. He had learned French during the three months he had spent with Uncle Thaddeus, but he knew no English, and it was a great day for him when he found upon his father's table a Polish translation of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* which Apollo Korzeniowski was making to fill some of his empty hours.

In February 1869 father and son went to live at Cracow, and there Joseph was sent to a preparatory school. It was not a very good school, but the boy thought little of its faults or of its merits. His father was dying, and the old house in the quiet, narrow street where the two lived held all his thoughts. There was a room with a tall white door where two noiseless nuns went in and out, and the little boy, sitting at his lessons in the room beyond, watched that door in scared and miserable silence. "I don't know what would have become of me," he says, "if I had not been a reading boy. But I was a reading boy. I read. What did I not read?" He would sometimes be allowed to go in and say good-night to his father, and would put his lips to the nerveless hand and watch for some recognizing look from the dim eyes; and then he would tiptoe to his own room at the end of the corridor and cry himself to sleep.

In May his father died, and Joseph was left alone. He remained at school in Cracow, and after a time his grandmother came to live there and look after him. He did not like school, and took little interest in his lessons; and a desire that had been growing up in him during the past two or three years became stronger and stronger. It was a strange desire for a fourteen-year-old Polish boy, who had never seen the sea and who belonged to an inland race. He wanted to be a sailor.

When he told his uncle of this wish there was consternation in the family. No Korzeniowski had ever been or wished to be a sailor. They had been soldiers and writers, and patriots



always. Joseph must follow in their steps. But he had no mind to do so. He persisted in his idea, especially after a journey he took with his tutor to Germany, Switzerland, and Italy, during which, at Venice, he had his first glimpse of the sea. His uncle, his grandmother, his tutor, and all his relations and friends argued indignantly against the idea, but Joseph only grew more determined. At length, in 1874, when he was seventeen years old, he was allowed to set off to Marseilles, with one or two letters of introduction, and the promise of a small monthly allowance.

If we ask why this boy should have set his heart so firmly on becoming a sailor, the answer seems to be that he hated the Russian dominion and desired above all things to be free. He could not be a Polish citizen—there were no Polish citizens; if he remained in Poland he would be, legally, a Russian. That thought he could not bear, and the great free ocean seemed to him the best place of escape from the hated tyranny. But, apart from this desire for freedom, there must have been in him a strange, inborn love of the sea, derived, perhaps, from some far-off, forgotten ancestor. The wish to escape, however strong it might have been, would not, of itself, have made him the true sailor he afterward became—the loving, understanding, faithful friend of the sea, in good fortune and in bad.

When he reached Marseilles he found one of the friends to whom he had an introduction ready to help him, and he began to go on short cruising voyages along the coast and make real acquaintance with the sea, of which he had caught just a glimpse two years before. Then he took longer voyages, one of six months to the West Indies, and learnt what it was like to be at sea in a storm. He was a sort of apprentice on board, something between the officers and the sailors, and he was rapidly learning many of the things that a sailor ought to know. Then he joined with four other young men—daring and eager for adventure—on a gun-running expedition on behalf of the Spanish party that wished to restore Don Carlos. This led him into a great many difficulties and privations,



and ended disastrously in the loss of the ship and a narrow escape from imprisonment. Conrad decided that he was tired of sailing in French ships, and resolved to go to England.

He landed at Lowestoft in June 1878, when he was nearly twenty-one, knowing hardly a word of the language, and with no friends in the country. For a few months he worked on a coasting vessel plying between Lowestoft and Newcastle, picking up English very quickly, and learning the duties of an English sailor. Then he went to London, and, after some trouble, shipped as an able seaman on board the *Duke of Sutherland*, bound for Australia.

The next fifteen years were spent, for the most part, at sea. Conrad passed the necessary examinations, one after another, became a master, and was put in command of a ship. He became naturalized as a British subject, and most of the time he spent on land was passed in England. He spoke English fluently, though with a marked foreign accent, but he wrote it almost as if it were his native tongue; and when, by and by, the impulse came to him to write the story of some of his adventures it was in English, not in Polish, that he wrote.

His first published story was called *The Black Mate*. He sent it in, about 1885, for a competition in *Tit-bits*, and it won the prize. After that he spent much of his spare time in attempts at story-telling. The day on which he began his first novel he always remembered very clearly. It was in September 1889, when he had been in London for some months waiting for a new command. He had been loafing about, he says, and spending a good deal of time with various friends. "It was very fine for a time, but after a bit I did get tired of resting. Then I began to look for a ship—I should think the hardest work on earth. But the ships wouldn't even look at me. And I got tired of that game too." Then one morning in September, "an autumn day with an opaline atmosphere, a veiled, semi-opaque lustrous day," he sat down in his London lodgings and began to write a story founded on something that had happened on one of his voyages two years before. He had no idea



of what he was going to write, no plot or plan or definite aim. He just went on as the thoughts came into his head, and when he was tired of writing he put the story aside. For long periods it was put away altogether, and it was not finished until five years later.

In 1894 Conrad was again in London, waiting for a ship, and during the first three months of the year he finished his story, which he called *Almayer's Folly*, and sent it to a London publisher. It was accepted, and published three months later. It is not a story of the sea, but of an Eastern river and a wonderful tropical country, full of a strange, deadly beauty that seems to affect the characters of the people living there. The style is marvellously suited to the subject. It gives just the effect of strange, rich beauty that the story requires. The Polish writer had proved himself a master of the English language.

The book had just enough success to decide him to write another, and by the end of the next year he had finished *The Outcast of the Islands*, which is a sort of sequel to *Almayer's Folly*. That also was moderately successful, and Conrad decided to give up going to sea and take to writing as a profession. His health was ruined by the years he had spent in Eastern climates. Moreover, his uncle had died and left him a small legacy, and on that and what he could earn by his books he hoped to be able to live in comfort.

In 1896 he married, and he and his wife went to live on Ile Grande, an island off the coast of Brittany. They lived in a house such as the peasants of the island used, with a large kitchen that had beds like ships' berths along its walls, a little room partitioned off from the kitchen for meals, and two bedrooms upstairs. It looked right out westward over the sea; there was nothing, Conrad said, between their house and North America except the Atlantic. In this house Conrad began *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, a sea-story, and sketched out two other stories. He finished *The Nigger* at a farmhouse in Essex, to which they went after they left Ile Grande. It is



the story of a sailor's life at sea, the life that Conrad knew so well from his own experience. Some people think this is the best of all his works, better even than *Lord Jim*, which followed it in 1900, and is another wonderful story of the sea. Here is an extract from *Lord Jim*:

The *Patna* was a local steamer as old as the hills, lean like a greyhound, and eaten up with rust worse than a condemned water-tank. . . . After she had been painted outside and whitewashed inside, eight hundred pilgrims (more or less) were driven on board of her as she lay with steam up alongside a wooden jetty.

They streamed aboard over three gangways, they streamed in urged by faith and the hope of paradise, they streamed in with a continuous tramp and shuffle of bare feet, without a word, a murmur, or a look back; and when clear of confining rails spread on all sides over the deck, flowed forward and aft, overflowed down the yawning hatchways, filled the inner recesses of the ship—like water filling a cistern, like water flowing into crevices and crannies, like water rising silently even with the rim. Eight hundred men and women with faith and hopes, with affections and memories, they had collected there, coming from north and south and from the outskirts of the East, after treading the jungle paths, descending the rivers, coasting in praus along the shallows, crossing in small canoes from island to island, passing through suffering, meeting strange sights, beset by strange fears, upheld by one desire. They came from solitary huts in the wilderness, from populous campongs, from villages by the sea. At the call of an idea they had left their forests, their clearings, the protection of their rulers, their prosperity, their poverty, the surroundings of their youth and the graves of their fathers. They came covered with dust, with sweat, with grime, with rags—the strong men at the head of family parties, the lean old men pressing forward without hope of return; young boys with fearless eyes glancing curiously, shy little girls with tumbled long hair; the timid women muffled up and clasping to their breasts, wrapped in loose ends of soiled head-cloths, their sleeping babies, the unconscious pilgrims of an exacting belief. . . .

An Arab, the leader of that pious voyage, came last. He walked slowly aboard, handsome and grave in his white gown and large turban. A string of servants followed, loaded with his luggage; the *Patna* cast off and backed away from the wharf.

She was headed between two small islets, crossed obliquely the anchoring-ground of sailing-ships, swung through half a circle in the shadow of a hill, then ranged close to a ledge of foaming reefs. The Arab, standing up aft, recited aloud the prayer of travellers by sea. He invoked the favour of the Most High upon that journey,



implored His blessing on men's toil and on the secret purposes of their hearts; the steamer pounded in the dusk the calm water of the Strait; and far astern of the pilgrim ship a screw-pile lighthouse, planted by unbelievers on a treacherous shoal, seemed to wink at her its eye of flame, as if in derision of her errand of faith.

She cleared the Straits, crossed the bay, continued on her way through the "One-degree" passage. She held on straight for the Red Sea under a serene sky, under a sky scorching and unclouded, enveloped in a fulgor of sunshine that killed all thought, oppressed the heart, withered all impulses of strength and energy. And under the sinister splendour of that sky the sea, blue and profound, remained still, without a stir, without a ripple, without a wrinkle—viscous, stagnant, dead. The *Patna*, with a slight hiss, passed over that plain luminous and smooth, unrolled a black ribbon of smoke across the sky, left behind her on the water a white ribbon of foam that vanished at once, like the phantom of a track drawn upon a lifeless sea by the phantom of a steamer.

Every morning the sun, as if keeping pace in his revolutions with the progress of the pilgrimage, emerged with a silent burst of light exactly at the same distance astern of the ship, caught up with her at noon, pouring the concentrated fire of his rays on the pious purposes of the men, glided past on his descent, and sank mysteriously into the sea evening after evening, preserving the same distance ahead of her advancing bows. The five whites on board lived amidships, isolated from the human cargo. The awnings covered the deck with a white roof from stem to stern, and a faint hum, a low murmur of sad voices, alone revealed the presence of a crowd of people upon the great blaze of the ocean. Such were the days, still, hot, heavy, disappearing one by one into the past, as if falling into an abyss for ever open in the wake of the ship; and the ship, lonely under a wisp of smoke, held on her steadfast way black and smouldering in a luminous immensity, as if scorched with a flame flicked at her from a heaven without pity.

The nights descended on her like a benediction.

Before *Lord Jim* was finished Conrad had removed to Pent Farm, near Ashford, in Kent.

Up to this time, although Conrad had a circle of admirers who were enthusiastic about his books, the general public had taken very little notice of them. He had to work very hard, writing for magazines and sending out story after story, to earn even a moderate income for himself and his wife and his two little sons. In 1904 he published a story called *Nostromo*,



from which he hoped great things, but it was no more successful than the others had been; it was, he said in his disappointment, a "black frost." His first great success was won when *Chance* appeared in 1912. Then the public seemed suddenly to wake up to the fact that here was a great storyteller, whom they had under-valued and neglected. After that everything was changed. His earlier books were read with enthusiasm, and others, as they appeared, were eagerly received. His fame rose higher year by year, and before his death in 1924 he had won for himself a place among the great English writers.

#### IV. H. G. WELLS

Mr H. G. Wells has sometimes been called the novelist of Greater London, because many of his books are about people who live in the newer suburbs that have grown up so rapidly on every side of the city. The heroes of these books are mostly small tradesmen, shop assistants, and poor schoolmasters, and the life that the books describe is the drab, monotonous life of people who work hard for their living, and have little time or money—and, in most cases, little taste—for anything beyond the daily round of business and the cheap, unintellectual amusements which that life provides. Yet Mr Wells can make these unadventurous people as interesting, if not quite as thrilling, as he makes the wonderful, superhuman beings whom he creates to be the heroes of quite another kind of book that he writes—the scientific romance, of which we shall speak later. He knows the life of the poorer suburbs well. His father kept a small drapery and general store at Bromley, in Kent, and was, as well, a professional cricketer. The store was never very successful, and at length it failed altogether. Then Wells's mother, who before her marriage had been a lady's maid, took a post as housekeeper at Up Park, near Petersfield, and her son, who was then fourteen years old, went to serve



behind the counter in a chemist's shop. From there he went to a drapery establishment, but he did not make a very successful shopman. His heart was set on obtaining a good education, and he studied hard in every moment of his scanty leisure. At length, by means of scholarships and grants, he managed to gain a place at the Normal School of Science, South Kensington. Here he studied under Huxley, and at the end of his course took a first-class degree in zoology.

After that he became an assistant master in a school at St John's Wood, but an accident in the playing-fields brought on a long illness which made active work impossible. Wells then began writing for the papers, and was successful enough to feel encouraged to go on with literary work. In 1895, when he was twenty-nine years old, he wrote his first book, which he called *The Time Machine*. In this early work he did not draw upon his own experiences for his story. He followed the method which he has since used with great success in a whole series of tales which have been called scientific romances. For these he takes a certain scientific law and imagines what results might follow if this were developed, or altered, or suspended. What would happen if men learnt how to suspend the law of gravitation? Supposing a food were discovered by means of which men could grow at a regular, calculated rate, so many inches for so many pounds, would a race of giants be produced? Supposing a man could make himself invisible and move unseen among his fellows, what strange results might follow? What should we do if an angel or a mermaid arrived in our land? What would follow if it became possible to develop the lower animals into men?

To a number of questions of this kind Mr Wells in his stories gives original and startling answers. Sometimes he takes his readers far into the future and shows them what he imagines the world will be like when a great and general advance in science shall have been made. In *The Sleeper Awakes* he pictures the case of a man who has slept for two centuries, and has awakened to a changed world.



It astonished him to realize how little the common man had changed, in spite of the visible change in his conditions. Life and property, indeed, were secured from violence all over the world, zymotic diseases, bacterial diseases, had practically vanished, everybody had a sufficiency of food and clothing, was warmed in the city ways and sheltered from the weather.

Yet man himself had not, as his surroundings had done, made a great advance toward perfection. This is one of the great lessons that Mr Wells's books teach. Science can do mighty and wonderful things, but it cannot bring about a change in man's nature. It can make him "lord of his machines, but not of his own passions."

Of the other class of books that Mr Wells writes one of the best known is *Kipps*, which tells the story of a draper's assistant and what he does when, quite unexpectedly, a large sum of money is left to him. Another is *Tono-Bungay*, which tells how a man who keeps a small chemist's shop in a country town invents a patent medicine, which he calls Tono-Bungay, and becomes enormously rich; his nephew shares his rise to fortune, and shares also his downfall when the great schemes that they have built up collapse utterly. *Mr Britling Sees It Through* shows the effect of the War on a thoughtful, middle-aged man whose son is killed fighting.

The following extract is from *Tono-Bungay*, and describes the schooldays of George Ponderevo, the chemist's nephew:

I do not remember that my schooldays were unhappy—indeed, I recall a good lot of fine mixed fun in them—but I cannot without grave risk of misinterpretation declare that we were at all nice and refined. We fought much, not sound formal fighting, but "scraping" of a sincere and murderous kind, into which one might bring one's boots—it made us tough at any rate—and several of us were the sons of London publicans, who distinguished "scraps" where one meant to hurt from ordered pugilism, practising both arts, and having, moreover, precocious linguistic gifts. Our cricket-field was bald about the wickets, and we played without style and disputed with the umpire; and the teaching was chiefly in the hands of a lout of nineteen, who wore ready-made clothes and taught despicably. The headmaster and proprietor taught us arithmetic, algebra, and Euclid, and to the older boys even



trigonometry, himself, and I think now that by the standard of a British public school he did rather well by us. . . .

We spent our rare pennies in the uncensored reading matter of the village dame's shop, on the *Boys of England* and honest penny dreadfuls—ripping stuff, stuff that anticipated Haggard and Stevenson, badly printed and queerly illustrated and very, very good for us. On our half-holidays we were allowed the unusual freedom of rambling in twos and threes wide and far about the land, talking experimentally and dreaming wildly. There was much in those walks! To this day the landscape of the Kentish weald, with its low broad distances, its hop gardens and golden stretches of wheat, its oasts and square church towers, its background of downland and hangers, has for me a faint sense of adventure added to the pleasure of its beauty. We smoked on occasion, but nobody put us up to the proper "boyish" things to do; we never "robbed an orchard," for example, though there were orchards all about us; we thought stealing was sinful; we stole incidental apples and turnips and strawberries from the fields, indeed, but in a criminal, inglorious fashion, and afterwards we were ashamed.

## V. JOHN GALSWORTHY

In the year 1892 Joseph Conrad was working as an able seaman on board the sailing-ship *Torrens*, which was making a voyage from Australia to South Africa; and one of the passengers on board the ship was a young Englishman named John Galsworthy. He had lately left Oxford, where he had taken an honours degree in law, and it was intended that he should follow in his father's footsteps and become a lawyer. He did not much like the profession, and was glad to put off entering upon it; and since his father was a rich man, and there was no urgent need that he should begin to earn money for himself, he started, in 1891, on a voyage round the world. It was during this voyage that he embarked on the *Torrens* and met Conrad. The two, unlike as they were in birth and upbringing, and although there was ten years' difference in their ages, soon made friends; and they remained on terms of close and intimate friendship until Conrad's death. Neither of them had then, as it seemed, any idea of making the writing of fiction his chief work in life. Yet less than ten years later



Conrad had left the sea and become a famous novelist, and Galsworthy had given up the plan of becoming a lawyer and had published, besides several youthful and immature stories, the first of the works which were to give him the high place among writers of fiction that he holds to-day.

This work was called *Villa Rubein*, and though it had many faults—which its author recognized more fully than did anyone else, for he afterward rewrote it—it showed most of the qualities that have marked Mr Galsworthy's later novels and plays. Mr Galsworthy has an intense interest in the social questions of the day, and a deep, painful sympathy with the poor and the oppressed and the outcast. He hates injustice, and he writes of it with fiery indignation. He does not profess to have found a remedy for all public ills and grievances; he shows, indeed, how sometimes the most well-meant interference with other peoples' affairs does more harm than good. But he does not for that reason advise us all to sit down contentedly and do nothing to help our poorer brothers. It is clear that the people he most admires are the people who go on day after day doing just the piece of work that they see wants doing—doing it cheerfully and bravely, making no fuss and not bothering about rewards—getting all the joy they can out of life, not denying themselves beauty or comfort just for the sake of denying it, but taking care not to be greedy or grasping, and ready to give with both hands when the right time comes.

Mr Galsworthy is, however, like Dickens, much more than a social reformer. He is a great story-teller. He can create real, living men and women—people whom we feel we know far better than the people we read about in the papers, or even than some of our neighbours and acquaintances. Just as we have for many years talked about Mr Pickwick and Mrs Gamp and Becky Sharp and Colonel Newcome and Mrs Poyser as if they were our own particular friends, so we are beginning to talk of old Jolyon and Soames Forsyte and Michael Mont, and even of Smithers, the faithful maid



whose stays always creaked, and "that fellow Riggs," the chauffeur.

His books, too, are full of beauty. He is a realist—that is, he sets out to show life as it is, not as he would like it to be; but he does not, like some realists, fix his eyes on what is ugly and sordid, and refuse to look at the beauty and brightness which are equally real. He shows us not only the actual beauty of the world, but the moral beauty of its people; and he can find this—or traces of it—in those from whom many of us might be inclined to turn away in disgust. He can see both kinds of beauty, physical and moral, in animals. No one has written of dogs and horses more lovingly, yet less sentimentally, than Mr Galsworthy.

He has the great gift of humour. It is a strange, ironic humour, and does not make you laugh aloud as Dickens's humour does. Most likely, if you were to read one of his books, you would see nothing funny in it. Galsworthy is not a writer for young people, and you would do well to leave his books until you are a good deal older than you are at present. It is not that he does not love and understand young people. His children are as real and living as his men and women, and the parts of his books that tell about them are perfectly delightful; but he deals very largely with questions and difficulties of which young people know very little, and with which it is not necessary that they should concern themselves.

Mr Galsworthy has written many novels and many plays. I will not try to tell you something about each one of them, or even to give you a list of their names. I will take two volumes, *The Forsyte Saga* and *A Modern Comedy*, and try to illustrate from these, very briefly, some of the characteristics of Mr Galsworthy's writing of which we have been speaking.

Each of these volumes contains three long novels and two short 'Interludes.' These form together what is really one very long story, telling of the fortunes of a family named Forsyte. The founder of the family was a Dorset stonemason. He had come to London, and had been so successful in his



work as a builder that when he died he had left £30,000 to be divided among his ten children. There were six sons, and all of them had done very well for themselves, so that when the story opens, in June 1886, they were all rich men. Most of them had retired from business, and were living in comfort and sober luxury in substantial, imposing London houses. One of the sisters was married to a man of the same type as her brothers; the other three—one a widow and two unmarried—lived with their youngest brother, Timothy, at his house in the Bayswater Road.

All the Forsytes were practical and unimaginative, with an enormous respect for property of every kind, and a natural distrust of such words as 'ideas' and 'ideals.' There was a code of behaviour to which every Forsyte held as his or her chief guide through life—certain things that a Forsyte did not do, and certain others that he never left undone. They were a hard-working, kind-hearted, narrow-minded, stubborn, sturdy race. Each of them found fault with all the others, and yet they were all held together by a family instinct, so that it seemed as if nothing could break up their solid, formidable rank.

The breaking-up came when, in the second and third generations, some of the young people (Forsytes either by birth or by marriage) rebelled against the family traditions and insisted on going their own way and living their lives according to their own ideas. Even then the tradition persisted, for some of the rebels were but weaklings, and the strong ones were few in number. There was young Jolyon, the artist son of strong-willed, lovable old Jolyon, the eldest of the six brothers; June, the hot-tempered, warm-hearted daughter of young Jolyon, with her tiny figure and crown of flaming golden hair; Jon, her half-brother, a poet and a dreamer; and Fleur, daughter of Soames Forsyte, brilliant, clear-headed, modern, and bent on getting the thing she wanted, no matter what stood in the way.

Opposed to these stood Soames, son of James, the second of



the brothers. Soames was, even more than the members of the elder generation, a typical Forsyte, and the least attractive of them all. In him the family qualities had been refined and made more efficient by a modern education; they had not been changed. At first we dislike him heartily; but as the story goes on—although there is no point at which we can say, “Here Soames began to change”—we feel that he is altering and mellowing, and becoming attractive and even lovable. Before the end of the story comes we find ourselves talking affectionately of “old Soames,” as of a familiar friend whose failings make part of his charm; and his brave death, in the autumn of 1926, we feel as a real calamity.

I will quote two passages which will illustrate Mr Galsworthy's feeling for children and for animals, and will show some of the beauties of his style. The first tells of the death of old Jolyon. He is living at his country house, Robin Hill, and young Jolyon, his wife, and elder daughter are away on a holiday. Only the younger children—the third Jolyon, who is called Jolly, and Holly, his sister—are left at home. Old Jolyon is devoted to these children, but he is still more devoted to Irene, his nephew Soames' wife, who comes sometimes to visit him. On this particular summer afternoon he is expecting her. He has been ill and has been kept in bed during the morning, but in the afternoon he gets up and sits down under the oak-tree by the children's swing, his old dog Balthasar lying down beside him.

It was quite shady under the tree; the sun could not get at him, only make the rest of the world bright so that he could see the Grand Stand at Epsom away out there, very far, and the cows cropping the clover in the field and swishing at the flies with their tails. He smelled the scent of limes, and lavender. Ah! that was why there was such a racket of bees. They were excited—busy, as his heart was busy and excited. Drowsy, too, drowsy and drugged on honey and happiness; as his heart was drugged and drowsy. Summer—summer—they seemed saying; great bees and little bees, and the flies too!

The stable clock struck four; in half an hour she would be here. He would have just one tiny nap, because he had had so little



sleep of late; and then he would be fresh for her, fresh for youth and beauty, coming towards him across the sunlit lawn—lady in grey! And settling back in his chair he closed his eyes. Some thistledown came on what little air there was, and pitched on his moustache more white than itself. He did not know; but his breathing stirred it, caught there. A ray of sunlight struck through and lodged on his boot. A bumble-bee alighted and strolled on the crown of his Panama hat. And the delicious surge of slumber reached the brain beneath that hat, and the head swayed forward and rested on his breast. Summer—summer! So went the hum.

The stable clock struck the quarter past. The dog Balthasar stretched and looked up at his master. The thistledown no longer moved. The dog placed his chin over the sunlit foot. It did not stir. The dog withdrew his chin, quickly, rose, and leaped on old Jolyon's lap, looked in his face, whined; then, leaping down, sat on his haunches, gazing up. And suddenly he uttered a long, long howl.

But the thistledown was still as death, and the face of his old master.

Summer—summer—summer! The soundless footsteps on the grass!

The next extract is about little Jon. Jolly had been killed in the Boer War, and his step-brother, born in 1901, had been christened Jolyon, to keep up the family name, but was called Jon.

Through the massive skylight illuminating the hall at Robin Hill, the July sunlight at five o'clock fell just where the broad stairway turned; and in that radiant streak little Jon Forsyte stood, blue-linen-suited. His hair was shining, and his eyes, from beneath a frown, for he was considering how to go downstairs, this last of innumerable times, before the car brought his father and mother home. Four at a time, and five at the bottom? Stale! Down the banisters? But in which fashion? On his face, feet foremost? Very stale. On his stomach, sideways? Paltry! On his back, with his arms stretched down on both sides? Forbidden! Or on his face, head foremost, in a manner unknown as yet to any but himself? Such was the cause of the frown on the illuminated face of little Jon. . . .

Up till now that father had possessed what was left of his heart by the groom, Bob, who played the concertina, and his nurse "Da," who wore the violet dress on Sundays, and enjoyed the name of Spraggins in that private life lived at odd moments even by domestic servants. His mother had only appeared to him, as it were, in dreams, smelling delicious, smoothing his forehead just



before he fell asleep, and sometimes docking his hair, of a golden brown colour. When he cut his head open against the nursery fender she was there to be bled over; and when he had nightmare she would sit on his bed and cuddle his head against her neck. She was precious but remote, because "Da" was so near, and there is hardly room for more than one woman at a time in a man's heart. With his father, too, of course, he had special bonds of union; for little Jon also meant to be a painter when he grew up—with the one small difference, that his father painted pictures, and little Jon intended to paint ceilings and walls, standing on a board between two step-ladders, in a dirty-white apron, and a lovely smell of whitewash. His father also took him riding in Richmond Park, on his pony, Mouse, so called because it was so coloured.

Little Jon had been born with a silver spoon in a mouth which was rather curly and large. He had never heard his father or his mother speak in an angry voice, either to each other, himself, or anybody else; the groom, Bob, the cook, Jane, Bella, and the other servants, even "Da," who alone restrained him in his courses, had special voices when they talked to him. He was therefore of opinion that the world was a place of perfect and perpetual gentility and freedom.

## VI. GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

You will remember that, more than a hundred and fifty years ago, when the English drama was becoming more and more artificial and insipid, it was brought back to life by two Irishmen, Oliver Goldsmith and Richard Brinsley Sheridan. Something of the same service has been done for it in our own day by another Irishman, George Bernard Shaw. Shaw has not the lightheartedness and the fun of those earlier dramatists. The service he has done for the theatre he has done in a way peculiarly his own; and we shall understand better what that way is if we try first to learn something about George Bernard Shaw himself.

He was born in Dublin in 1856. His father held a post in the Civil Service, but he belonged to a good family, and had relatives who were possessed of titles and riches; and he never forgot these facts. This pride in birth and connexions showed itself in ways that seemed to his son snobbish and hateful; the



Shaws, however poor, must strive to keep up a good appearance before the world, and must never associate with people in a class below their own. George Bernard Shaw felt for his father little love and little respect. With his mother he had more sympathy. She was a lover of music, a singer and a pianist, and the boy inherited her musical taste, and joined with her in studying the art in which they both delighted. Yet in spite of this he felt that his home, with its shifts to keep up appearances, its restraints and conventions, was thoroughly unsatisfactory; and he began, while he was still very young, to form that opinion of family life on which his later doctrines of Socialism have been built up. The family, he believed, was nothing. You did not necessarily love a person better because he or she was your father or your mother, your brother or your sister. All men were your brothers. To insist on relatives living together was to cramp their development and spoil their chances of usefulness and happiness. What you had to think of was how you could best develop your own gifts and your own personality.

He went to several schools during his boyhood, but he had the same sort of feeling for his school that he had for his home. "I did not learn anything at school," he says. "None of my schoolmasters really cared a rap, provided my father paid my schooling fee, the collection of which was the real object of the school. Consequently I did not learn my school lessons, having more important ones in hand. My schooling did me a great deal of harm, and no good whatever."

One of the schools he went to was the Wesleyan Connectional School, and here, his master says, he was generally near the bottom of his classes. Out of school he learnt many things. He went with his mother to concerts in which she took part, and became familiar with the works of great composers. She taught him to sing, and he taught himself to play. He haunted the National Gallery of Ireland, and studied all the pictures there; and bought books on art and painters that he might understand them better.



At fifteen he left school and became a clerk in the office of a land agent. He hated his work, but he did it thoroughly and well, and was advanced quickly to a higher position. Month by month he grew more discontented. He felt that this was not the work he was meant to do; and at length, when he was just turned twenty, he threw up his post and went to London to seek his fortune.

It was a long time before he found it. During the first nine years, from 1876 to 1885, he earned, he says, six pounds. He lived on the money that was sent him from home; and when his father died his mother worked hard giving music lessons in order to earn what her son needed. Many people, Mr Shaw says, blamed him for living on his mother's earnings, and thought that he ought to have found some occupation that would instead have enabled him to keep her. But he held steadfastly to his principle of self-development, and went on training himself in literature and music, and taking part in various movements that interested him. He joined the Fabian Society in 1884 and became a worker in the cause of Socialism. His wit and his characteristically strong method of expression helped him to become an effective speaker, and he spoke often at Socialist meetings. He wrote five novels during this period, which were all rejected by every publisher in London in turn. They appeared later in different Socialist periodicals, and in 1901 Mr Shaw republished them, calling them *Novels of my Nonage*. They are not great works, but they are amusing, and the characters are clearly drawn. Each is intended to set forward some particular principle of Socialism, and each has a good deal of Mr Shaw's own peculiar, satirical wit, which is sometimes a little bewildering to ordinary readers.

In 1885 Mr Shaw began to write for several of the less-important London newspapers. He wrote critical articles on music, on the drama, and on painting. At this time the plays of the great Norwegian dramatist Ibsen were beginning to arouse attention all over Europe. They were very different from the dramas of the day, both in their subjects and in their



construction. They showed very clearly the evils that arose from some of the customs and practices of Society; for example, the first of Ibsen's plays, *A Doll's House*, raises the question as to what a girl, who has always been treated as a petted child, should do when she realizes that she is a woman and has a woman's work to do in the world, yet sees no opportunity of doing it. These plays attracted Mr Shaw strongly, and in his articles he went back to them again and again.

In 1895 he became dramatic critic to the *Saturday Review*, and through that paper he was able to speak to a much larger and more important circle of readers than he had done before. His work for the revival of English drama had now begun, and he was able to rouse people to a sense that some change was needed, if it was only by startling and shocking them. He had for some years been writing plays himself, modelling them, in many respects, on the plays of Ibsen. His first play was called *Widowers' Houses*. It is about a young man who is horrified when he learns that the father of the girl he wishes to marry draws all his large income from slum property, but who, when he discovers later that his own money comes from a similar source, cannot make up his mind to renounce it, and settles down in contentment. It is not a pleasant play, and it is harshly told; it is much too dry and matter-of-fact to stir anybody's deeper emotions. Two other plays followed, but each of them had only a very small circle of admirers. It was not until 1894 that Shaw won his first real success with *Arms and the Man*. The play is intended to ridicule what is called the 'glory' of war; but the brilliant speeches, the unceasing flow of witticisms, the life and vigour of the whole, make it possible to forget the purpose and look upon the performance merely as a display of high spirits and magnificent verbal fireworks.

Mr Shaw did not by this play leap into fame as a dramatist at once, as Goldsmith and Sheridan had done by *She Stoops to Conquer* and *The Rivals*, but he laid the foundation of a reputation that was to grow steadily as the years went on. Mr Shaw has always had great faith in himself and a high



opinion of his own powers; and the general estimate of his genius has grown higher year by year. One play has succeeded another, until now their titles make a very long list. Nearly all of them contain some attack on existing institutions, or some piece of Socialist propaganda, but no member of the audience need, unless he wishes, take very much notice of these. He can enjoy the play without troubling about its underlying meaning. Indeed, it is not always very clear what that underlying meaning is. Shaw delights in paradoxes; he loves to make statements that seem startlingly impossible. His characters hold forth at great length on all sorts of subjects, sometimes connected with the action of the play, sometimes not. They pour out arguments of such dazzling brilliance that to follow them needs an effort that the playgoer is not prepared to make; and the consequence is that he often comes out of the theatre feeling that he has been magnificently entertained, but has not really been deeply touched, either to mirth or sadness, as by the plays of Shakespeare and the greater dramatists.

I am not going to give you a list of Mr Shaw's plays. The only one, I think, that you would care about at present is *Saint Joan*; and there you would see a very different peasant girl of Lorraine from the saintly Joan of Arc that your history books show you. It is interesting to compare the two, and to consider which is likely to be the truer portrait of the heroic Maid.

Mr Shaw's play *The Apple Cart*, written when he was "three score years and ten," is as full of his own characteristic brilliance as the plays he wrote more than forty years earlier.

## VII. RUDYARD KIPLING

Rudyard Kipling, like Thackeray, was born in India, and sent to England, when he was a very small boy, to be educated. He went first to a preparatory school, and then to the United Services College at Westward Ho, not far from Bide-



ford, in Devonshire. He has told us something about this school in his book *Stalky and Co.* It was a school where "eighty per cent. of the boys had been born abroad—in camp, cantonment, or upon the high seas," and "seventy-five per cent. were sons of officers in one or other of the services." The "Stalky" of the title was a youth of sixteen, who was preparing to enter Sandhurst—a clever, wily youth, with a strong sense of humour, and all the qualities that go to the making of a great leader. The "Co." was made up of M'Turk, who was Irish, and the Beetle, who was Rudyard Kipling himself. These three shared a study, and did everything together. They did not care much for the ordinary sports of the school, had little interest in cricket and football, and only went to matches when they were forced to do so. They loved best to get away to some quiet place out of doors, where they could lie in the sun and read—and smoke. The Beetle especially was the most insatiable of readers. He carried books about with him wherever he went; he wrote poetry, and edited the school magazine. Yet these boys were by no means quiet and law-abiding. Their chief delight was in laying traps, with much forethought and elaboration, and seeing the unwary tumble into them. Stalky devised these schemes, and carried them out with the help of the "Co." For the most part the three were triumphant and the victim reduced to confusion, but sometimes fortune went the other way and Stalky and Co. suffered. They had a long-standing feud with one of the house-masters, a Mr King, clever, sarcastic, with a high opinion of himself, but petty and revengeful. Many of the schemes were directed against him, and the fun rises higher and higher as we read how, without open rudeness or rebellion, they managed to drive him almost to a frenzy, always maintaining the pose of very polite and slightly injured boys. Yet, in spite of this feud, they were loyal to their school as boys could be, and they had a great admiration for the headmaster. *Stalky and Co.* is dedicated to him, and in the poem that is printed as an introduction to the book Kipling owns fully the debt that the boys of



the United Services College owed to their masters. "Let us now praise famous men," it begins, and it goes on to tell what these "famous men" did for their pupils—how they taught them common sense, "which is more than knowledge," to obey orders, and many other valuable things:

This we learned from famous men,  
Knowing not its uses,  
When they showed in daily work,  
Man must finish off his work—  
Right or wrong, his daily work—  
And without excuses.

At the end of his school career the Beetle gained the desire of his heart, and went off to India as a journalist. This was the desire of Kipling's heart too, and he set himself to attain it. He refused to go to a university, and in 1880, before he was sixteen, he was back in India.

He joined the editorial staff of the *Civil and Military Gazette*, Lahore, and became special correspondent to the *Pioneer* of Allahabad. Soon he began to write stories and poems for these two papers, and *Plain Tales from the Hills* and *Departmental Ditties* appeared in them day by day. They attracted a great deal of attention, for they were quite unlike anything to which the readers were accustomed. The young journalist was beginning to make a name for himself, and the series of "Rupee Books" which began to appear in 1889, and included *The Light that Failed*, added to his reputation. But he was not long content to remain in India; he had a zest for travel and adventure which has since carried him almost all over the world. His first journey was to America. He visited San Francisco, Yellowstone Park, Utah, and Chicago, and many other places, and from these he wrote journalistic letters for various papers.

In 1891 he came back to England, and in 1892 he married; and he and his wife started on a tour round the world. Mr Kipling was especially interested in the countries belonging to the British Empire, and he very soon became what he has remained ever since—an interpreter who could help the people living in one part of the Empire to understand and sympathize



with their brothers who dwelt in a land far distant. Mr Kipling's high enthusiasm has roused the enthusiasm of Englishmen who cannot hope to travel, as he has done, through the far-off realms peopled by loyal subjects of England's king. "We *do* possess an Empire," he wrote.

. . . Cortes is not dead, nor Drake, and Sir Philip Sidney dies every few months—if you know where to look. The adventurers and Captains courageous of old have only changed their dress a little and altered their employments to suit the world in which they move. Meantime this earth of ours—we hold a fair slice of it, so far—is full of wonders and miracles and mysteries and marvels; and in default of being in the heart of great deeds, it is good to go up and down seeing and hearing tell of them all.

Rudyard Kipling has written some delightful books for children. I expect you all know *The Jungle Book* and *The Second Jungle Book*. You remember the "naked brown baby who could just walk" whom Father Wolf found just outside his cave in the jungle one night, and how he looked up into Father Wolf's face and laughed; how Mother Wolf cried out that she had never seen a man's cub, and bade her husband bring it in; how Father Wolf picked it up in his mouth so gently that there was no scratch made on its skin, and laid it down among his cubs, where it pushed its way between them to get warm; how Shere Khan, the great man-eating tiger, came to the door of the cave and claimed the baby as his quarry; how Mother Wolf defended him and defied Shere Khan; how she named him Mowgli the Frog; and how he lived and grew up with the wolf cubs, and learned to know all the other animals, and had many wonderful adventures before at last he went back to his own people. You remember, too, Little Toomai, "who had seen what never man had seen before—the dance of the elephants at night and alone in the heart of the Garo hills"; and Teddy, whose life was saved by Rikki-tikki-tavi, the mongoose, who killed the great cobra, Nagaina. Then there are the animals, who are as fascinating as the children, and whom Kipling seems to know and understand just as well; and we learn to know something of them



too, and to respect those who keep the Laws of the Jungle. There are, as he tells us, hundreds and hundreds of these laws, but they can be summed up quite shortly:

Now these are the Laws of the Jungle, and many and mighty are they;  
But the head and hoof of the Law and the haunch and the hump is  
—Obey!

The *Just-So Stories* are intended, Kipling tells us, "for little children"; but no one—boy or girl or grown-up person—can look at the alluring list of titles without straightway sitting down to find out how the whale got his throat, how the camel got his hump, how the rhinoceros got his skin, and what happened to the Elephant's Child and Old Man Kangaroo; and having once begun the reader will go on until he reaches the last and perhaps the best of the stories, *The Butterfly that Stamped*. He will have made some most delightful friends—Yellow-Dog Dingo, Stickly-Prickly Hedgehog, Slow-Solid Tortoise, Taffimai Metallumai, which means "Small-person-without-any-manners-who-ought-to-be-spanked," and the Eldest Magician, and Suleiman-bin-Daoud and his lovely wife, the Most Beautiful Balkis. He will have looked at the fascinating illustrations, which are so like the stories that he might have known they were drawn by the author himself even if he had not been told so at the beginning of the book; and he will feel that he has learned a great deal more about animals and their ways and their individual characters than a mere natural history book would have been able to teach him.

We must not forget that Rudyard Kipling is a poet as well as a teller of stories. The poem which many people think is his greatest—*The Recessional*—was written in 1897 for the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria, and its refrain, "Lest we forget," has passed almost into a national watchword.

In 1899 Mr Kipling was travelling in America, and news came to England that he was lying dangerously ill in New York. Your fathers and mothers will remember the dismay with which the news was received, and how all England, and all the Empire too, waited anxiously for the bulletins that



came, day by day, from the sickroom. These grew graver and graver, and the painful suspense increased. When at last there came first hope and then certainty that the brave fight the patient was making would end in victory there was general relief and rejoicing.

Very soon his country was in need of his services once more. The South African War broke out, and it was Kipling who wrote the poem that helped to hearten our soldiers and keep the country in mind of her duty toward them. *The Absent-minded Beggar* is not a great poem like *The Recessional*, but it is great in its purpose, and it accomplished what it was meant to do.

In 1901 came another great book, *Kim*. It is the story of a little white boy who lived in India. His mother had been nursemaid in a colonel's family, and had married Kimball O'Hara, a young Irish colour-sergeant. They had both died when Kim was a very little boy, and he had been left with only a poor old woman to look after him. Very soon he had learned to look after himself, and he had led a strange, vagabond life in the great city of Lahore, having little to do with any white people, and picking up all sorts of native lore. He was burned black as any native, and he spoke the native tongue perfectly. He was keen-witted and resourceful, and as time went on he managed to take quite an important part in the plots and secret adventures that are always going on in India. He delighted in setting his wits against the wits of those who were opposed to him, but he was loyal to his friends, and he never flinched in the face of danger. His adventures took him into all sorts of strange places, and his story is as exciting and interesting as a story can well be.

There are many other books and poems written by Mr Kipling, most of them about soldiers and sailors and strange lands across the sea. Most of you, I expect, know the poem *Big Steamers*, which tells how our merchant ships go out to all parts of the world and bring back food to England, who cannot provide nearly enough for all her people; and how the big



warships guard the steamers, that they may come and go in safety. You have heard, perhaps, the fine, heartening poem that came when the Great War broke out in 1914, *For All We Have and Are*. The best summary of Mr Kipling's message is contained in these lines from another poem:

Keep ye the Law—be swift in all obedience,  
Clear the land of evil, drive the road and bridge the ford,  
Make ye sure to each his own  
That he reap what he has sown:  
By the peace among our peoples let men know we serve the  
Lord.



# Index

- Abbot, The*, 484  
*Absalom and Achitophel*, 265-268, 297  
*Absent-minded Beggar, The*, 657  
*Adam*, 71-73  
*Adam Bede*, 562  
*Addison, Joseph*, 291-298, 302, 308, 313, 314, 384, 543, 560  
*Adonais*, 511  
*Ae Fond Kiss*, 428  
*Agnes Grey*, 553, 554  
*Alchemist, The*, 218, 219-222, 262  
*Alfred the Great*, 61  
*Allegro, L'*, 244, 245, 247, 248  
*Almayer's Folly*, 636  
*Amazing Marriage, The*, 620  
*Amelia*, 330  
*And now Another Day is gone*, 623  
*Anne, Queen*, 296, 299, 302, 306, 543  
*Anne of Geierstein*, 486  
*Annus Mirabilis*, 259-260, 261  
*Antiquary, The*, 480  
*Antony and Cleopatra*, 208  
*Apple Cart, The*, 652  
*Arbour of Amorous Devises, The*, 180  
*Arcades*, 244  
*Ariel, to Miranda take*, 512  
*Arms and the Man*, 651  
*Arnold, Matthew*, 525  
*Arthur, King*, 39-48, 52, 135-140, 168, 249, 590, 591  
*As You Like It*, 202, 206, 208  
*Asolando: Facts and Fancies*, 603  
*Astræa Redux*, 258  
*Astrophel and Stella*, 167  
*Augustine, St*, 26, 36, 60  
*Auld Lang Syne*, 428  
*Aurora Leigh*, 602  
*Austen, Cassandra*, 514, 515, 519, 521, 522  
*Austen, Jane*, 514-522, 525  
*Autobiography, Gibbon's*, 363-364  
*Autumn*, 334  
*Avenge, O Lord, Thy Slaughtered Saints*, 450  
*BACON, FRANCIS*, 216, 223-227, 228, 560  
*Bailly, Harry*, 93  
*Balder*, 27  
*Balin and Balan*, 591  
*Ball, John*, 81  
*Ballad on a Wedding*, 234-235  
*Banks o' Doon, The*, 428  
*Barnaby Rudge*, 533  
*Barrett, Elizabeth*—see *Browning, Elizabeth Barrett*  
*Barry Lyndon*, 538  
*Bartholomew Fair*, 218  
*Bas Bleu*, 386  
*Battle of Blenheim, The*, 449  
*Battle of the Books, The*, 298  
*Baxter, Richard*, 270  
*Beaufort, Lady Joan*, 117-120  
*Beaumont, Francis*, 207, 216, 262  
*Becket*, 592  
*Bede*, 35-38, 60  
*Belle Dame sans Merci, La*, 503  
*Bells and Pomegranates*, 595, 597, 598  
*Benedict Biscop*, 34  
*Beowulf*, 16-25, 27, 246  
*Berners, Lord*, 141  
*Betrothed, The*, 484  
*Bevis of Hampton*, 53  
*Bible, the*, 155-156, 577  
*Bickerstaff, Isaac*, 287-292  
*Big Steamers*, 657-658  
*Bishop Hatto*, 449  
*Black Dwarf, The*, 484  
*Black Mate, The*, 635  
*Blackwood's Magazine*, 502, 561, 578  
*Blakesmoor in H—shire*, 493  
*Blessed Damozel, The*, 606  
*Blot on the 'Scutcheon, A*, 598  
*Borough, The*, 420



## THE GOLDEN ROAD IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

- Boswell, James, 355, 364, 365, 366-373, 385  
*Bower of Delites, A*, 180  
 Branwell, Miss, 546, 547, 549, 551, 552  
*Break, break, break*, 586  
 Breton, Nicholas, 180  
*Bridal of Triermain, The*, 468  
*Bride of Abydos, The*, 474, 475  
*Bride of Lammermoor, The*, 484  
*British Book*, 41  
 Brontë, Anne, 546, 551, 553, 554, 555  
 Brontë, Branwell, 546, 547, 550, 551, 552, 553, 555  
 Brontë, Charlotte, 525, 546-557, 565  
 Brontë, Emily, 546, 547, 549, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 557  
 Brontë, Maria, 546, 547, 549  
*Brother and Sister*, 558  
 Brown, Ford Madox, 605  
 Browning, Elizabeth Barrett, 598-602  
 Browning, Robert, 523, 525, 582, 593-603  
 Buccleuch, Duchess of, 460  
 Bulwer-Lytton, Edward (Lord Lytton), 561  
 Bunyan, John, 271-279, 542  
 Burbage, Richard, 205, 215  
 Burke, Edmund, 362-363, 370, 386, 398, 417, 436, 455  
 Burne-Jones, Sir Edward, 607, 608  
 Burney, Dr Charles, 392-393, 396, 397, 398, 400  
 Burney, Frances (Madame D'Arblay), 387, 392-403, 514, 515, 517  
 Burney, James, 492  
 Burns, Robert, 421-429, 431, 432, 498, 575  
 Butler, Samuel, 258  
*Butterfly that Stamped, The*, 656  
 Byrd, William, 180  
 Byrne, Paddy, 350-351  
 Byron, Lord, 419, 421, 468-474, 475, 476, 479, 480, 484, 485, 488, 502, 509, 511, 512, 513, 523  
 CABOT, SEBASTIAN, 184, 190  
 Cædmon, 28-30, 31, 34  
 Calenius, Walter, Archdeacon of Oxford, 41  
*Camilla*, 402, 514  
*Campaign, The*, 291, 297  
 Campion, Thomas, 180, 181, 234  
*Canterbury Tales, The*, 85, 86, 88-98, 134, 153, 164  
 Canute, King, 104  
*Captain Singleton*, 313  
 Carlyle, Jane Welsh, 569, 575  
 Carlyle, Thomas, 523, 525, 561, 565-576, 577, 581, 582, 584, 585, 594, 618  
 Caroline, Queen, wife of George III, 401-402  
 Carter, Elizabeth, 386  
 Caryll, John, 304  
*Castaway, The*, 415  
*Castell of Perseverance, The*, 131  
*Castle Dangerous*, 486  
*Castle of Indolence, The*, 335  
*Castle of Otranto, The*, 390-392, 455  
*Castle of Wolfenbach, The*, 519  
*Cavalier Tunes*, 598  
 Caxton, William, 133-135  
*Cecilia*, 400-401, 514  
*Cenci, The*, 510  
 Chapman, George, 217, 218  
 Charles I, 233, 238, 242  
 Charles II, 242, 246, 255, 257, 258, 260, 261-262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 269, 274, 280, 283, 374, 440  
 Chaucer, Geoffrey, 83-94, 99, 100, 114, 116, 134, 140, 152, 153, 178, 269, 332  
 Chester, 121-122  
 Chesterfield, Lord, 342-343  
 Chettle, Henry, 195  
*Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, 468, 471-472, 474, 480, 520  
*Christabel*, 447, 452  
*Christian Hero, The*, 282  
*Christmas Carol, The*, 534  
*Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago*, 493  
*Chronica Majora*, 64-66  
*Chronicles*, Froissart's, 140-143  
*Clandestine Marriage, The*, 376  
*Clarissa, or The History of a Young Lady*, 324  
 Clermont, 519  
 Clive, Kitty, 375



# INDEX

- Cloud, The*, 511  
 Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, 438, 439, 440-449, 452, 454, 457, 459, 470, 489, 490, 491, 496, 497, 498  
 Colet, John, 146  
 Collins, William, 336, 404  
 Colman, George, 363, 365, 376, 377  
*Colomb's Birthday*, 598  
 Columba, St, 26  
 Columbus, Christopher, 145, 184  
*Coming of Arthur, The*, 591  
*Complaint, or Night Thoughts on Life, Death and Immortality, The*, 335  
 Comus, 244  
*Conduct of the Allies, The*, 299  
 Conrad, Joseph, 630-639, 641, 642  
*Conscious Lovers, The*, 284  
 Copernicus, 146  
 Coriolanus, 208  
*Cornhill Magazine, The*, 545  
*Corsair, The*, 474, 476, 500  
*Cottar's Saturday Night, The*, 421, 424  
 Cotton, Sir Robert, 24  
*Count Robert of Paris*, 486  
*Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia, The*, 165-166, 168  
 Coverdale, Miles, 156  
 Cowper, William, 312, 406-415, 418, 420, 429, 431, 560  
 Crabbe, George, 415-421, 429, 431  
 Crashaw, Richard, 237  
 Crist, 31  
*Critic, The*, 382  
 Cromwell, Oliver, 243, 575  
*Crossing the Bar*, 592  
*Cruising Voyage round the World, A*, 309  
*Cupid and my Campaspe*, 182-183  
*Curse of Kehama, The*, 450-451  
 Cuthbert, 37  
*Cymbeline*, 208  
 Cynewulf, 30-31, 34  
*Cynthia's Revels*, 217  
  
*Daniel Deronda*, 565  
 D'Arblay, Madame — see Burney, Frances  
 Davenant, Sir William, 262  
*David Copperfield*, 527, 534, 535, 542  
 Davies, Thomas, 366, 367  
  
*De Augmentis*, 227  
 De Quincey, Thomas, 491, 523  
*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 364  
 Defoe, Daniel, 286, 308-313  
 Delany, Mary, 386  
*Departmental Ditties*, 654  
*Deserted Village, The*, 350, 360-361, 418  
*Desperate Remedies*, 627  
 Devereux, Lady Penelope, 166-167  
 Dickens, Charles, 523, 524, 525, 527-536, 538, 539, 540, 561, 575, 582, 584, 618, 643, 644  
*Dictionary, Johnson's*, 341-343, 349, 366  
*Dido of Carthage*, 163  
 Dingley, Rebecca, 301, 302, 314  
*Dinner at Poplar Walk, A*, 529  
*Discourse of a Discoverie for a New Passage to Cataia, A*, 185  
*Discourses on Art*, 362  
*Discovery of the Large, Rich, and Beautiful Empire of Guiana, The*, 229  
 Disraeli, Benjamin, 525  
*Doctor Faustus*, 161-163  
 Dodsley, Robert, 341-342, 396  
*Doll's House, A*, 651  
*Dombey and Son*, 534, 540, 554  
 Douglas, Catherine, 120, 614  
 Dowland, Henry, 180  
 Drake, Sir Francis, 184, 187, 188, 190, 228  
*Dramatic Lyrics*, 598  
*Dramatic Romances and Lyrics*, 598  
*Dramatis Personæ*, 602  
 Drayton, Michael, 215, 216, 242  
*Dream Children*, 493  
*Dream of Fair Women, A*, 583  
*Dream of the Rood, The*, 31  
 Dryden, John, 253, 258, 259, 261, 262, 265-269, 281, 311, 623  
*Dynasts, The*, 630  
  
*Eastward Hoe!* 217-218  
*Ecclesiastical History of the English People, The*, 35-36  
*Edinburgh Review, The*, 469, 476, 504  
 Edward II, 163  
 Edward III, 83, 140-143  
*Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*, 337, 404



# THE GOLDEN ROAD IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

- Elene*, 31  
 Eliot, George (Mary Ann Evans), 525, 557-565  
 Elizabeth, Queen, 156, 157, 159, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 179, 184, 193, 196, 206, 216, 223, 224, 226, 232, 233, 234, 498, 523  
*Emma*, 522  
*Endymion*, 501-502, 503, 504  
*England's Helicon*, 180  
*English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, 469, 471  
*English Chronicle, The*, 60-63  
*English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century, The*, 545  
*Englishman, The*, 309  
*Enquiry concerning Political Justice, An*, 491  
*Enquiry on the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe, An*, 355  
*Epithalamium*, 178  
 Erasmus, 147, 148, 151, 152, 154  
*Esmond*, 543, 545  
*Essay on Criticism, An*, 303  
*Essay on Man, An*, 337, 416  
*Essay on Shakespeare*, 386, 392  
*Essays, Bacon's*, 225, 227  
 Etherege, Sir George, 263  
 Evans, Mary Ann—see Eliot, George  
*Eve of St Agnes, The*, 503  
*Eve of St John, The*, 460  
*Evelina*, 395-400, 403, 455, 514  
 Evelyn, John, 255, 256  
*Every Man in His Humour*, 217, 219  
*Every Man out of His Humour*, 217  
*Everyman*, 128-131  
*Excursion, The*, 582  
  
*Faerie Queene, The*, 165, 167-177, 178, 228, 276, 335  
*Fair Maid of Perth, The*, 486  
*Fall of Lucifer, The*, 122  
*Far from the Madding Crowd*, 628-629  
*Fatal Revenge, The*, 456  
*Fear no more the Heat o' the Sun*, 182  
*Felix Holt*, 564  
 Fermor, Arabella, 303, 304  
 Fielding, Henry, 325-330, 384, 394  
 FitzGerald, Edward, 585  
*Flagellant, The*, 442  
  
 Fletcher, John, 216, 262  
*Flying Post, The*, 286  
 Foote, Samuel, 375  
*For All We Have and Are*, 658  
 Ford, John, 216  
*Foresters, The*, 114  
 Forster, John, 527  
*Forsyte Saga, The*, 644-648  
*Fortunes of Nigel, The*, 484  
 Fox, Charles James, 365  
*Frazer's Magazine*, 538, 571  
*Frederick the Great*, 575  
*French Revolution, The*, 573-574  
*Friends Departed*, 238  
 Frobisher, Martin, 184, 185, 190  
 Froissart, John, 140-141  
 Froude, James Anthony, 561, 575  
*Funeral, or Grief à la Mode, The*, 284  
*Further Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, The*, 312  
  
 GALSWORTHY, JOHN, 642-648  
*Gareth and Lynette*, 591  
 Garrick, David, 340-341, 343, 355, 364, 365, 367, 369, 371, 372, 374, 375, 376, 386  
 Gaskell, Elizabeth, 525  
 Gay, John, 331  
*Gentleman's Magazine, The*, 341  
 Geoffrey of Monmouth, 41  
 George III, 348, 401  
*Geraint and Enid*, 591  
*Giaour, The*, 473-474  
 Gibbon, Edward, 363-364  
 Gilbert, Sir Humphrey, 184, 185, 191  
 Gillman, James, 452  
*Goblin Market*, 609-611  
 Godolphin, Lord, 297  
 Godwin, Mary, 509  
 Godwin, William, 491  
*Golden Legend, The*, 134  
 Goldsmith, Oliver, 349-361, 362, 364, 369, 371, 374, 376-379, 382-383, 392, 418, 648, 651  
*Good-natur'd Man, The*, 360, 374, 376-378, 379, 392  
*Gorgious Gallery of Gallant Inventions, A*, 180  
 Gower, John, 114, 116



# INDEX

- Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, 273  
*Grace for a Child*, 242  
 Gray, Thomas, 336-337, 388, 389, 404  
*Great Expectations*, 535  
*Great Hoggarty Diamond, The*, 538  
 Greene, Robert, 157, 158, 181, 183, 195, 217, 234  
 Grenville, Sir Richard, 188-190, 228  
*Groatsworth of Wit bought with a Million of Repentance, A*, 195  
 Grocyn, William, 147  
*Guinevere*, 591  
*Gulliver's Travels*, 315-319, 320, 331  
*Guy Mannering*, 479-480, 500  
*Guy of Warwick*, 53  
  
 HABINGTON, WILLIAM, 237  
 Hakluyt, Richard, 185-191, 216, 228, 246  
 Hallam, Arthur, 584, 588  
*Hamlet*, 206, 207, 262  
*Handfull of Pleasant Delites, A*, 180  
 Hardy, Thomas, 621-630  
*Hark! hark! the Lark*, 182, 183  
*Harold*, 592  
*Havelok the Dane*, 53  
 Hawkins, Sir John, 184, 185  
 Hawkins, Sir Richard, 185, 190  
 Hazlitt, William, 491, 494, 523  
*Heart of Midlothian, The*, 484  
*Henry VI*, 195  
 Herbert, George, 235-238, 239, 244, 332  
 Hereward the Wake, 50, 104  
 Herrick, Robert, 222-223, 238-242, 244, 332  
 Higden, Ranulf, 101  
 Hilda, Abbess, 28, 29  
*Hind and the Panther, The*, 268  
*History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and his Friend, Mr Abraham Adams, The*, 328, 329  
*History of the Britons*, 40-41  
*History of Henry VII*, 225, 227  
*History of Jason, The*, 134  
*History of the Kings of Britain*, 41  
*History of Lot and Abraham, The*, 123-124  
*History of Music, The*, 395, 396  
*History of Sir Charles Grandison, The*, 325  
  
*History of Tom Jones, a Foundling, The*, 329-330, 375, 455  
*History of the World, the*, 230  
 Hogg, Thomas Jefferson, 506, 507  
*Holly-tree, The*, 449  
*Holy City, or The New Jerusalem, The*, 273  
*Holy Dying*, 270  
*Holy Fair, The*, 424  
*Holy Grail, The*, 591  
*Holy Living*, 270  
*Holy Willie's Prayer*, 424  
*Horrid Mysteries*, 519  
*Hours of Idleness*, 469  
*Household Words*, 535  
 Howard, Henry, Earl of Surrey, 156  
*Hudibras*, 258, 259  
 Hunt, Leigh, 491, 499, 500, 502, 509, 512, 513, 584  
 Hunt, William Holman, 605  
 Hutchinson, Colonel, 244  
*Hyperion*, 503  
  
 IBSEN, HENRIK, 650-651  
*Idylls of the King*, 591-592  
*Iliad, The*, Pope's translation of, 306, 308  
*In Memoriam*, 587-589  
*Inchcape Rock, The*, 449  
*Irene*, 341, 343  
 Irving, Edward, 567  
*Isabella*, 503  
*Italian, The*, 519  
*Ivanhoe*, 484  
  
 JAMES I OF ENGLAND, 206, 207, 216, 217, 218, 226, 229, 230, 231, 233, 242  
 James I of Scotland, 114-120, 614  
*Jane Eyre*, 548-549, 554, 555, 556  
*Janet's Repentance*, 562  
 Janeway, James, 270  
*Jew of Malta, The*, 163  
 John of Vienne, Sir, 141  
*John Anderson, my Jo, John*, 428  
 Johnson, Esther (Stella), 300-301, 302, 314, 319  
 Johnson, Dr Samuel, 335, 339-350, 354, 355, 359, 360, 361-363, 364, 365, 366-373, 376, 385-386, 397, 398, 417, 540, 575, 623



# THE GOLDEN ROAD IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

- Jonson, Ben, 215, 216-223, 238, 261, 262, 268, 383  
*Journal of the Plague Year, A*, 313  
*Journal to Stella*, 301-302  
*Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson, LL.D., The*, 373  
*Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon*, 330  
*Jude the Obscure*, 627, 630  
*Julius Cæsar*, 206, 207  
*Jungle Book, The*, 655  
*Just-So Stories*, 656
- KEATS, JOHN, 498-505, 509, 511, 513, 523, 585, 593, 605  
*Kenilworth*, 484  
 Kenyon, John, 599, 600  
*Kilhugh and Olwen*, 40, 43-49  
*Kim*, 657  
*King Charles*, 598  
*King Horn*, 53-59  
*King Lear*, 203, 208  
*King's Quair, The*, 118  
*King's Tragedy, The*, 614  
 Kingsley, Charles, 525, 581, 618  
 Kipling, Rudyard, 652-658  
*Kipps*, 641  
*Knight of the Burning Pestle, The*, 262  
 Knox, John, 575  
*Kubla Khan*, 452  
 Kyd, Thomas, 157, 158, 159-160, 193
- Lady Geraldine's Courtship*, 599  
*Lady of the Lake, The*, 468, 475  
*Lady of Shalott, The*, 585  
 Lamb, Charles, 489-497, 523  
 Lamb, Mary, 489-497  
*Lamia*, 503  
 Langland, William, 74-81, 82, 83, 90, 92  
 Lansdowne, Lord, 305  
*Lara*, 474, 479, 500  
*Last Judgment, The*, 126  
*Last Tournament, The*, 591  
 Latimer, Hugh, 113-114  
*Law against Lovers, The*, 262  
*Lay of the Last Minstrel, The*, 461, 462, 498  
 Layamon, 43  
*Legend of Montrose, The*, 484  
 Leicester, Earl of, 193, 195
- Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, 575  
 Lewis, Matthew Gregory, 456, 470, 476  
*Liberal, The*, 512  
*Liberty*, 335  
*Library, The*, 417, 420  
*Life and Death of Jason, The*, 612-613  
*Life and Death of Mr Badman, The*, 279  
*Life of Dr Johnson, The*, 370-373  
*Life of Jesus*, 560  
*Life of Napoleon*, 486  
*Life of Nelson*, 451  
*Light that Failed, The*, 654  
 Linacre, Thomas, 147  
 Linley, Elizabeth (Mrs Sheridan), 379-380  
*Lintot's Miscellany*, 304  
 Lionel, Duke of Clarence, 83, 85  
*Little Book for Little Children, A*, 270  
*Lives of the Poets*, 349  
 Lockhart, John, 482  
*Locksley Hall*, 585  
 Lodge, Thomas, 157, 180, 216  
*London*, 335, 341  
*London Chronicle, The*, 397  
*London Gazette, The*, 286  
*London Magazine, The*, 493, 494  
*Lord Jim*, 637-638  
*Loss of the Royal George, The*, 415  
*Lotos-eaters, The*, 585  
*Lovel the Widower*, 545  
 Lovelace, Richard, 234  
 Lovell, Robert, 443, 449  
*Love's Labour's Lost*, 194  
*Luria*, 598  
 Luther, Martin, 153  
*Lycidas*, 244, 248  
*Lying Lover, The*, 284  
 Lyly, John, 157, 158, 159, 182, 216  
*Lyrical Ballads*, 438, 445, 446, 582  
 Lytton, Lord — see Bulwer-Lytton, Edward
- Macbeth*, 203, 208  
*Mackery End, in Hertfordshire*, 493  
 Macready, William Charles, 598  
*Mad Lover, The*, 262  
*Madoc*, 450  
 Malory, Sir Thomas, 135-140  
 Mandeville, Sir John, 101-103, 144



# INDEX

*Mansfield Park*, 521  
 Mansion, Colard, 133  
 Marlborough, Duke of, 296, 297, 543  
 Marlowe, Christopher, 157, 158, 160-163, 193, 195, 250, 383  
*Marmion*, 462-467, 470, 472, 475  
 Marston, John, 217, 218  
*Martin Chuzzlewit*, 533  
 Massinger, Philip, 216  
*Maud*, 590  
 Maurice, Frederick Denison, 581  
*May Queen, The*, 585  
 Mazzini, Giuseppe, 575  
*Measure for Measure*, 208, 262  
*Memoirs of Alfred Lord Tennyson*, 589-590  
*Memoirs of a Cavalier*, 313  
*Memoirs of Colonel Hutchinson*, 244  
*Memoirs of Dr Burney*, 403  
*Men and Women*, 602  
 Meredith, George, 611, 616-621, 626  
 Meredith, Mary, 618  
*Merlin and Vivien*, 591  
*Midnight Bell, The*, 519  
*Midsummer Night's Dream, A*, 196-201, 262  
 Mill, John Stuart, 573, 575  
*Mill on the Floss, The*, 558, 562-564  
 Millais, Sir John Everett, 605, 606  
 Milton, John, 244-245, 247-255, 274, 297, 331, 416, 450, 494, 560  
 Milton, Mary, 248  
 Miracle plays, 121-126, 127  
*Modern Comedy, A*, 644-648  
*Modern Painters*, 578, 579-581  
*Moll Flanders*, 313  
*Monastery, The*, 484  
*Monk, The*, 456  
 Monmouth, Duke of, 264-266  
 Montagu, Elizabeth, 385-386, 392  
 Montagu, Lady Mary Wortley, 384  
*Monthly Magazine, The*, 528  
*Monthly Observer, The*, 618  
*Monthly Review, The*, 354  
*Moral Satires*, 412  
 Moralities, 127-132  
 More, Hannah, 386  
 More, Sir Thomas, 147-152, 232  
 Morris, William, 607-609, 611-614  
*Morte d'Arthur, Le*, Malory's, 134-140

*Morte d'Arthur, Tennyson's*, 585  
*Mr Britling Sees It Through*, 641  
*Mr Gilfil's Love Story*, 562  
*Mr H—*, 493  
*Mrs Leicester's School*, 493  
*Much Ado about Nothing*, 202, 206, 208, 262  
 Mundy, John, 181  
*My Luve is like a Red, Red Rose*, 429  
*Mysteries of Udolpho, The*, 456, 457, 518, 519  
*Mysterious Warnings, The*, 456, 519  
*Mystery of Edwin Drood, The*, 536  
 NAPOLEON BONAPARTE, 455, 537, 547, 575  
 Nash, Thomas, 158, 195  
*Necessity of Atheism, The*, 507  
*Necromancer of the Black Forest, The*, 456, 519  
 Nelson, Lord, 616, 622  
 New Testament, the, 154-155  
*Newcomes, The*, 543-545  
*Newspaper, The*, 420  
 Newton, John, 410, 411, 412  
*Nicholas Nickleby*, 530-531  
 Nicolls, Mary, 618  
*Nigger of the Narcissus, The*, 636-637  
*Noah and the Ark*, 123  
*Nocturnal Visit, The*, 456  
*Northanger Abbey*, 517-520, 522  
*Notes of a Journey from Cornhill to Grand Cairo*, 538  
*Novum Organum*, 227  
*Nun's Priest's Tale, The*, 93-98  
*Nymphidia*, 242-243  
*O wert thou in the Cauld Blast*, 428  
 Oates, Titus, 264, 267  
*Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat*, 388-389  
*Ode to Evening*, 404  
*Ode on a Grecian Urn*, 503  
*Ode to a Nightingale*, 503  
*Ode to the Skylark*, 511  
*Ode to the West Wind*, 510  
*Ode written during the Negotiations for Peace in 1814*, 450  
*Odes, Collins'*, 336



## THE GOLDEN ROAD IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

- Cenone*, 583, 585, 586  
*Old Benchers of the Inner Temple, The*, 493  
*Old Curiosity Shop, The*, 532-533  
*Old Mortality*, 484  
*Old Testament, the*, 155  
*Oliver Twist*, 530, 531  
*On a Distant Prospect of Eton College*, 336  
*On First Looking into Chapman's Homer*, 500  
*On Heroes and Hero-worship and the Heroic in History*, 575  
*Ordeal of Richard Feverel, The*, 619  
*Ordination, The*, 424  
*Orphan of the Rhine, The*, 519  
*Orpheus with his Lute*, 182  
*Othello*, 208  
*Outcast of the Islands, The*, 636  
*Oxen, The*, 630
- Pair of Blue Eyes, A*, 627  
*Palace of Art, The*, 583  
*Pamela*, 323-324, 325, 326, 328, 375, 455  
*Paracelsus*, 582  
*Paradise Lost*, 250-254, 274, 331  
*Paradise Regained*, 254  
*Paradyse of Daynty Devises, The*, 180  
*Paris, Matthew*, 64-66  
*Parish Register, The*, 420  
*Passing of Arthur, The*, 591  
*Passionate Pilgrim, The*, 180  
*Past and Present*, 575  
*Pauline*, 582  
*Peacock, Thomas Love*, 618  
*Peele, George*, 157, 158, 183, 195  
*Pelleas and Ettarre*, 591  
*Pendennis*, 543  
*Penseroso, Il*, 244, 245, 247  
*Pepys, Samuel*, 255-257, 259, 260-261, 262, 268  
*Percy, Thomas*, 355, 362, 365  
*Percy*, 386  
*Persuasion*, 522  
*Peter the Hermit*, 99  
*Petrarch*, 86, 87  
*Petre, Lord*, 303, 304  
*Peveril of the Peak*, 484  
*Philip*, 545  
*Philippa, Queen*, 83, 140-143  
*Phillips, Edward*, 253
- Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful, A*, 362  
*Phœnix Nest, The*, 180  
*Pickwick Papers, The*, 529-530  
*Pied Piper of Hamelin, The*, 598  
*Pilgrim's Progress from this World to that which is to come, The*, 274-279, 281, 311, 542  
*Pilgrimage, The*, 228-229  
*Pippa Passes*, 595-597, 598, 602  
*Pirate, The*, 484  
*Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven, The*, 272  
*Plain Tales from the Hills*, 654  
*Poems by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell*, 553  
*Poems by Two Brothers*, 583  
*Poet's Song, The*, 586  
*Poetaster*, 217  
*Polly Honeycombe*, 376  
*Polo, Marco*, 100-101  
*Polychronicon*, 101  
*Poole, Thomas*, 444  
*Poor Man and the Lady: a Story with no Plot, The*, 626  
*Pope, Alexander*, 303-306, 308, 311, 323, 331, 333, 341, 360, 416, 417  
*Post Boy, The*, 286  
*Practice of Piety, The*, 272  
*Praise of Chimney-sweepers, The*, 494-495  
*Prelude, The*, 430  
*Pride and Prejudice*, 515, 521  
*Princess, The*, 587, 589  
*Principall Navigations, Voiages, and Discoveries of the English Nation, The*, 187-191, 228  
*Prisoner of Chillon, The*, 480  
*Professor, The*, 553  
*Progress of Error, The*, 412  
*Prologue (The Canterbury Tales)*, 93  
*Prometheus Unbound*, 510  
*Punch*, 538  
*Purdie, Tom*, 482
- QUARLES, FRANCIS, 237  
*Quarterly Review, The*, 502  
*Queen Mab*, 508-509  
*Queen Mary*, 592  
*Quentin Durward*, 484



# INDEX

- RADCLIFFE, ANN, 456, 457  
 Raleigh, Sir Walter, 157, 169, 184, 188,  
 207, 216, 223, 228-230, 234  
*Rambler, The*, 343, 345, 362  
*Rape of the Lock, The*, 303-305  
*Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia*, 345-348,  
 366, 623  
*Recessional, The*, 656, 657  
*Redgauntlet*, 484  
*Reflections on the French Revolution*, 455  
*Religio Laici*, 268  
*Reminiscences, Carlyle's*, 576  
*Return of the Druses, The*, 598  
*Review, The*, 286  
 Reynolds, Sir Joshua, 361, 362, 365,  
 370, 386, 398, 521  
 Richard I, 113  
*Richard III*, 163  
 Richard of the Lea, Sir, 111-113  
 Richardson, Samuel, 320-325, 326, 328,  
 354, 384, 390, 394, 397, 398, 517  
*Rime of the Ancient Mariner, The*, 445-446,  
 447, 457  
*Ring and the Book, The*, 603  
*Rivals, The*, 380-382, 651  
 Robert III of Scotland, 114-116  
 Robin Hood, 104-114  
*Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne*, 109-111  
*Robinson Crusoe*, 310-313, 415, 455  
*Roderick, the Last of the Goths*, 450, 461  
 Roger of Wendover, 64  
 Rogers, Samuel, 578  
*Rokeby*, 468, 475  
*Romaunt of the Rose, The*, 127  
*Romeo and Juliet*, 262  
*Romola*, 564  
 Rossetti, Christina, 604, 609, 615  
 Rossetti, Dante Gabriel, 604-606, 607,  
 608, 609-611, 614, 615  
 Rossetti, Gabriele, 604  
*Roundabout Papers, The*, 545  
*Roxana*, 313  
*Rule, Britannia!* 335  
 "Rupee Books," the, 654  
 Ruskin, John, 525, 554, 576-582, 605,  
 606-607, 609  
*Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton,*  
*The*, 561  
*Saint Joan*, 652  
*St Ronan's Well*, 484  
*Saints' Everlasting Rest, The*, 270  
*Samson Agonistes*, 254  
 Sandys, George, 237  
*Sartor Resartus*, 567, 568, 570-572, 573,  
 574, 594  
*Saturday Review, The*, 651  
*Scenes from Clerical Life*, 561, 562  
*School for Scandal, The*, 382, 386-387  
*Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled*, 428  
 Scott, Sir Walter, 421, 427, 456, 457-  
 468, 470, 475-487, 488, 498, 515, 522,  
 523, 537  
*Seasons, The*, 335, 404  
*Second Jungle Book, The*, 655  
 Sedley, Sir Charles, 263  
*Sejanus*, 217  
*Select Collection of English Songs, A*, 422  
 Selkirk, Alexander, 309, 310  
*Sense and Sensibility*, 517, 520  
*Seven Lamps of Architecture, The*, 581  
 Severn, Joseph, 504  
 Shaftesbury, Lord, 264, 265, 266, 267,  
 268  
 Shakespeare, William, 157, 163, 182,  
 183, 192-215, 216, 217, 234, 242,  
 254, 255, 262, 297, 332, 349, 374,  
 375, 383, 494, 560, 575, 652  
*Shaving of Shagpat, The*, 618-619  
 Shaw, George Bernard, 648-652  
*She is a Winsome Wee Thing*, 428  
*She Stoops to Conquer, or The Mistakes of*  
*a Night*, 360, 378, 379, 651  
 Shelley, Percy Bysshe, 498, 499, 504,  
 505-513, 523, 593  
*Shepherd's Calendar, The*, 164  
 Sheridan, Elizabeth, 379  
 Sheridan, Richard Brinsley, 365, 379-  
 383, 386, 648, 651  
 Shirley, James, 216  
*Shirley*, 556  
 Sidney, Sir Philip, 157, 163, 164, 165-  
 167, 168, 234  
*Silas Marner*, 564  
*Silent Woman, The*, 218  
*Silver Tassie, The*, 428  
*Sir Gawayne and the Grene Knight*, 51-53  
*Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere*, 585



# THE GOLDEN ROAD IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

- Sketches by Boz*, 529  
*Sleeper Awakes, The*, 640-641  
 Smith, Adam, 365  
 Smollett, Tobias, 355, 384  
*Sonnets from the Portuguese*, 601-602  
*Sordello*, 594, 595, 597  
*Soul's Tragedy, A*, 598  
 Southampton, Earl of, 196  
 Southey, Robert, 439, 442, 443, 448-453, 454, 457, 459, 470, 488  
*Spanish Gypsy, The*, 564  
*Spanish Tragedy, The*, 159-160, 193, 194  
*Specimens of English Poets who lived about the Time of Shakespeare*, 492, 493  
*Spectator, The*, 292-298, 311, 384  
 Spenser, Edmund, 157, 163-165, 167-178, 208, 228, 335, 590  
*Spring*, 334  
*Stalky and Co.*, 653-654  
 Steele, Sir Richard, 281-285, 286-297, 308, 309, 313, 314, 374, 375, 384, 543  
 Sterne, Laurence, 384  
*Stones of Venice, The*, 581  
 Stow, John, 106  
 Stuart, Charles Edward, 307  
 Suckling, Sir John, 235  
*Summer*, 333-334  
*Sundering Flood, The*, 615  
*Superannuated Man, The*, 495-496  
 Swift, Jonathan, 287, 298-302, 308, 314-320, 331, 332, 543  
 Swinburne, Algernon Charles, 611  
  
*Tale of a Tub, The*, 298  
*Tale of Two Cities, A*, 535  
*Tales*, Crabbe's, 420  
*Tales of a Grandfather*, 486  
*Tales of the Hall*, 420  
*Tales from Shakespeare*, 493  
*Tales of Terror*, 456  
*Tales of Wonder*, 456  
 Talfourd, Thomas, 491  
*Talisman, The*, 484  
*Talking Oak, The*, 585  
*Tam o' Shanter*, 428  
*Tamburlaine the Great*, 160-161, 193  
*Task, The*, 406, 407, 413-414  
 Tate, Nahum, 268  
*Tatler, The*, 287-292, 311, 384  
  
 Taylor, Jeremy, 270  
*Tempest, The*, 208, 209, 214, 262, 494, 513  
 Temple, Sir William, 298, 300  
*Temple, The*, 235-237, 238  
*Tender Husband, The*, 284  
 Tennyson, Lord, 114, 523, 525, 554, 575, 582-592, 593, 594  
*Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, 627  
 Thackeray, William Makepeace, 523, 525, 536-545, 555, 556, 561, 575, 584, 652  
*Thalaba*, 449, 457, 461  
 Thomson, James, 331-335, 336, 404, 431  
 Thrale, Hester, 398  
*Time Machine, The*, 640  
*Times, The*, 606, 607  
*Titus Andronicus*, 194  
*To Autumn*, 503  
*To Lucasta, going to the Warres*, 234  
*To a Mountain Daisy*, 424, 426  
*To a Mouse*, 425-426  
*To Phyllis, the Fair Shepherdess*, 180-181  
*To Violets*, 239-240  
*Token for Children, A*, 270  
*Tono-Bungay*, 641-642  
*Tottel's Miscellany*, 180  
 Trade guilds, 121-126  
*Traveller, The*, 360, 361  
 Trelawny, E. J., 484, 513  
 Trevisa, John, 101  
*Troilus and Cressida*, 208  
*True Declaration of the Troublesome Voyage of Mr John Hawkins, A*, 185  
 Turner, J. M. W., 578, 579, 580  
*Twa Herds, The*, 424  
*Twelfth Night*, 202, 204, 206, 208, 262  
*Two Books of the Advancement of Learning*, 226-227  
*Two Gentlemen of Verona, The*, 633  
*Two Red Roses across the Moon*, 608-609  
*Two Voices, The*, 585  
 Tyler, Wat, 81, 141  
 Tyndale, William, 153-156  
  
*Ulysses*, 585  
*Under the Greenwood Tree*, 624-625, 627



# INDEX

Unwin, Mary, 408-409, 411, 412, 415  
 Unwin, William, 408, 409, 410  
*Utopia*, 148-152, 232

VANHOMRIGH, ESTHER, 302, 314, 319  
*Vanity Fair*, 540-542, 554  
*Vanity of Human Wishes, The*, 343  
 Vaughan, Henry, 237  
*Venus and Adonis*, 196  
*Verses supposed to be written by Alexander Selkirk*, 312, 415  
 Vesey, Elizabeth, 386  
*Vicar of Wakefield, The*, 356-359, 375, 455, 458  
*Villa Rubein*, 643  
*Village, The*, 418-420, 421  
*Villette*, 552, 557  
*Virginians, The*, 545  
*Vision of Piers Plowman, The*, 76-81, 127  
*Voiage and Travaile of Sir John Mandeville, The*, 101-103  
*Volpone*, 218  
 Voltaire, 353

WACE, 43  
 Walpole, Horace, 387-392, 455  
 Waltheof, 50, 104  
 Walton, Izaak, 237  
*Wanderer, The*, 403  
*Watchman, The*, 444  
*Watsons, The*, 519  
*Waverley, or 'Tis Sixty Years Since*, 475-478, 500, 520, 522  
*We are Seven*, 438

*Wealth of Nations, The*, 365  
 Wedgwood, Josiah, 449  
*Well of St Keyne, The*, 449  
 Wells, H. G., 639-642  
 Wesley, Charles, 335  
 Wesley, John, 335, 375, 404, 405, 406, 524  
*Wessex Poems*, 630  
*Westminster Review, The*, 561  
 White, Thomas, 270  
 Whitefield, George, 335, 405  
 Wiclif, John, 81, 92, 152-153, 154  
*Widowers' Houses*, 651  
*Wild Gallant, The*, 262  
 William and Mary, 280  
*Windsor Forest*, 303, 305  
*Winter*, 331-333  
*Winter's Tale, The*, 208, 209-214, 494  
*Woodstock*, 485  
 Wootton, John, 181  
 Wordsworth, Dorothy, 429-430, 434, 435, 437-438, 439, 444, 489  
 Wordsworth, William, 429-439, 441, 443, 444, 445, 446, 448, 449, 452, 454, 457, 459, 470, 488, 489, 491, 498, 520, 523, 560, 582, 589  
*World, The*, 342  
*Wuthering Heights*, 553, 554  
 Wycherley, William, 263  
  
*Ye Spotted Snakes*, 182  
*Yellowplush Papers, The*, 538  
*Yet if His Majesty, our Sovereign Lord*, 181-182  
 Young, Thomas, 335, 416

Entered in the Library of Congress  
 Copyright



**SRINAGAR ( Kashmir )**

**DATE LOANED**

*Class No.* \_\_\_\_\_ *Book No.* \_\_\_\_\_

Acc. No. \_\_\_\_\_

This book may be kept for **14 days**. An over - due charge will be levied at the rate of **10 Paise** for each day the book is kept over - time.

[illegible]



**SRINAGAR ( Kashmir )****DATE LOANED**

*Class No.* \_\_\_\_\_ *Book No.* \_\_\_\_\_

Acc. No. \_\_\_\_\_

This book may be kept for **14 days**. An over - due charge will be levied at the rate of **10 Paise** for each day the book is kept over - time.

[illegible]



**SRINAGAR ( Kashmir )**

**DATE LOANED**

Class No. \_\_\_\_\_ Book No. \_\_\_\_\_

Acc. No. \_\_\_\_\_

This book may be kept for **14 days**. An over - due charge will be levied at the rate of **10 Paise** for each day the book is kept over - time.

[illegible]



**SRINAGAR ( Kashmir )**

**DATE LOANED**

Class No. \_\_\_\_\_ Book No. \_\_\_\_\_

Acc. No. \_\_\_\_\_

This book may be kept for **14 days**. An over - due charge will be levied at the rate of **10 Paise** for each day the book is kept over - time.

[illegible]



**S.P. College Library,**  
**SRINAGAR.**

**DATE LOANED**

A fine of **one anna** will be charged for  
each day the book is kept overtime.

16803

108057

65

--	--	--



820.9

R

C95G

Cruise :- Golden Road in  
16803 English Literature

6 Nov 1955

108057 9143

108057 7127

15.6.57 3024

27 Feb 1957 3024

SRI  
PRATAP  
COLLEGE LIBRARY  
SRINAGAR.

Members of College  
Teaching Staff can borrow  
ten book at a time and  
can retain these for one  
month.

Any intermediate  
student of the college can  
borrow one book at a time,  
any Degree or Honours  
Post Graduate student of the  
college, two book at a time,  
and these can retain books  
for 14 days.

Books in any way  
injured or lost shall  
be paid for or  
replaced by the  
borrower.